Galaxy
SCIENCE FICTION

DECEMBER 1956

35¢

The Native Problem
By
ROBERT SHECKLEY

•

TRACKING DOWN THE "SEA SERPENT"
By
WILLY LEY

•

Continuing
THE STARS MY DESTINATION
By
ALFRED BESTER

—

AND OTHER STORIES

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"Not exactly, but the newspapers and the commentators—"

"Of course. Well, we SHOW other possible futures. Do you believe we will be able to leave the Earth?"

"Eventually, perhaps. But not in our lifetime."

"We don't agree. Assuming you're right, though, isn't that all the more reason to want to know what we'll find on other planets, Professor?"

"I think I see what you mean."

"Can we achieve immortality?"

"Ah. Hum. I've often wondered."

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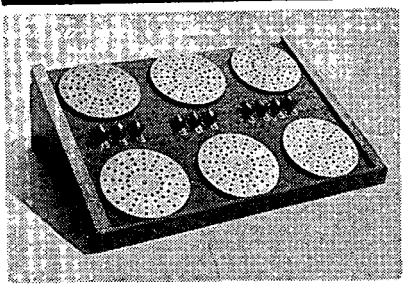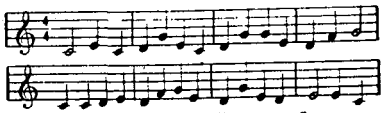

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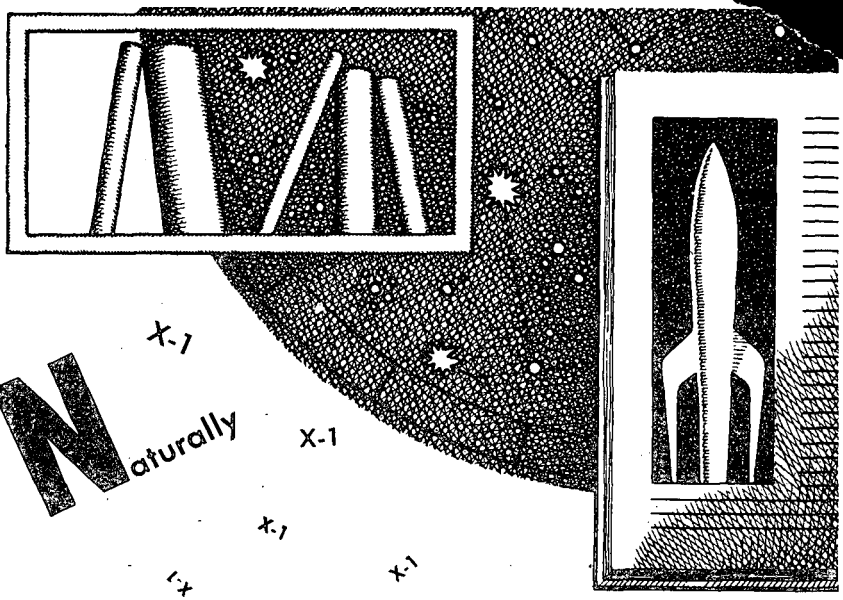

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WAX & WANE

Remembering my editorials proving There Are Aliens Among Us, an alarmed reader sent me an article from *Travel* Magazine with the shaky message: "The plot thickens!!!" In the article, Dolph Sharp declares:

"I first began to wonder why my luggage weighed more on the return trip only after it had happened the fifth time in a row. I was being checked through the airport on my way home and the clerk looked up from weighing my one bag.

"'You're three pounds over.'"

"'What!' I cried. I am given to crying under such circumstances. The bag had only weighed 39 pounds on my going trip. I bought a trinket or two that couldn't weigh more than six-seven ounces, but on the other hand I had lost a pair of socks, a necktie and one shoe.

"If anything, the balance should have been in my favor."

Naturally, it wasn't. Checking with other travelers, Sharp found they had the same puzzling experiences each time they came back on a plane.

Unfortunately, his attempts to guess how come only eliminated possibilities: that the airlines tampered with their scales; that luggage could "somehow trap and preserve and expand with fumes and steams and essences" so that a suitcase could "retain the New Yorkness of New York;" the opinion of a physicist that one generally has clothes cleaned before a trip, not on returning; and, with a note of despair, Sharp asks the reader for the answer.

I doubt if he'll get it from them; they have not been collecting data as I have done. The problem is much more confusing than he thinks, for we are dealing with *two* phenomena: gain and loss.

To add to Sharp's half of the question:

Overweight people will testify that a single bite of something fattening adds a pound or more.

According to logic, you should weigh, dressed, exactly as much as your stripped weight plus the weight of your clothing. Tests by independent laboratories, however, show that you weigh more dressed.

Unless a large roast (bird or meat) is eaten at one sitting, it gains weight each day, regardless of the number of sandwiches, salads, hash and other leftover

(*Continued on page* 144)

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The Native Problem

Plenty of room in space for every misfit? Sheer propaganda—Danton discovered there was less room in space than anywhere else!

By ROBERT SHECKLEY

EDWARD DANTON was a misfit. Even as a baby, he had shown pre-anti-social leanings. This should have been sufficient warning to his parents, whose duty it was to take him without delay to a competent pre-pubescent psychologist. Such a man could have discovered what lay in Danton's childhood to give him these contra-group tendencies. But Danton's parents, doubtless dramatizing problems of their own, thought the child would grow out of it.

He never did.

In school, Danton got barely passing grades in Group Acculturation, Sibling Fit, Values Recognition, Folkways Judgment and other subjects which a person must know in order to live serenely in the modern world. Because of his lack of comprehension, Danton could never live serenely in the modern world.

Illustrated by FINLAY

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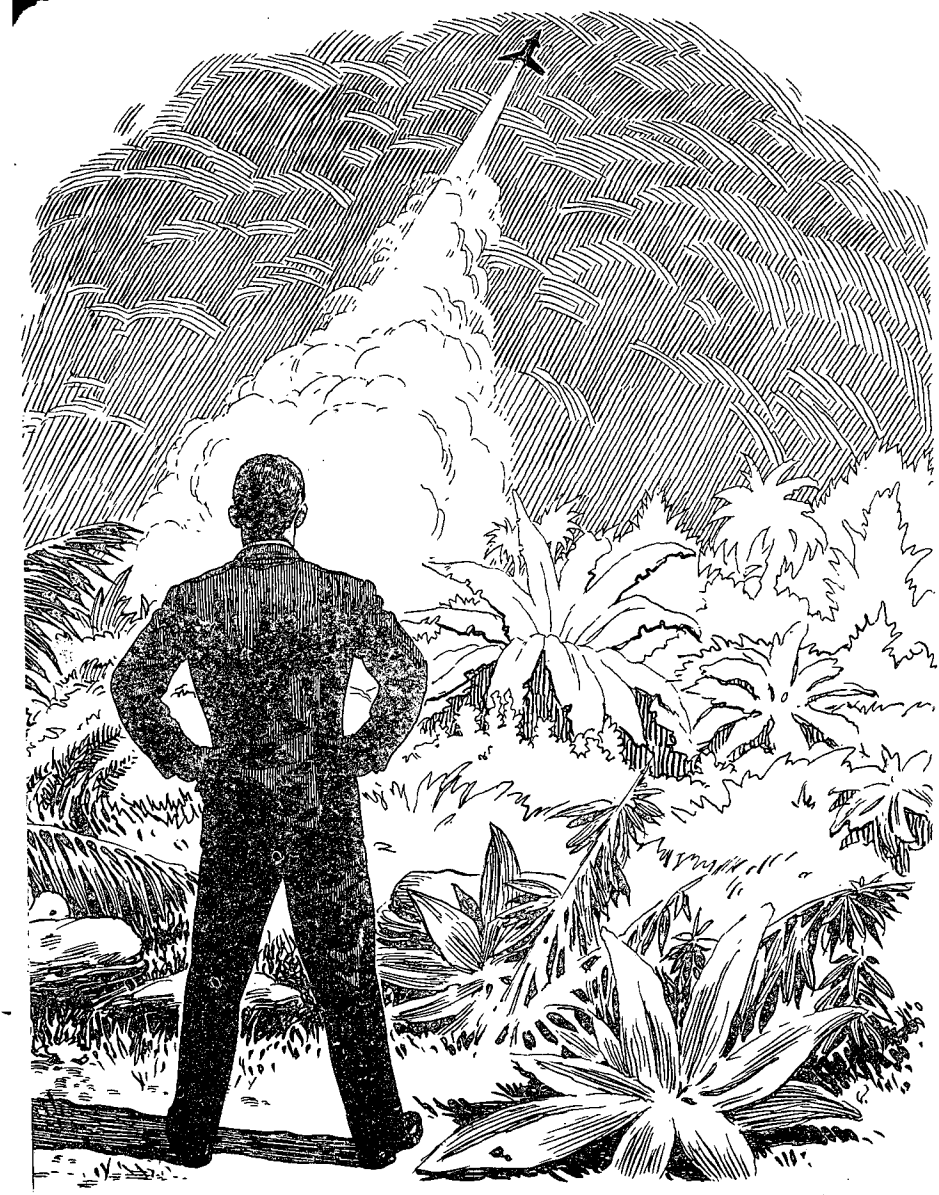

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It took him a while to find this out.

From his appearance, one would never have guessed Danton's basic lack of Fit. He was a tall, athletic young man, green-eyed, easy-going. There was a certain something about him which considerably intrigued the girls in his immediate affective environment. In fact, several paid him the highest compliment at their command, which was to consider him as a possible husband.

But even the flightiest girl could not ignore Danton's lacks. He was liable to weary after only a few hours of Mass Dancing, when the fun was just beginning. At Twelve-hand Bridge, Danton's attention frequently wandered and he would be forced to ask for a recount of the bidding, to the disgust of the other eleven players. And he was impossible at Subways.

HE TRIED hard to master the spirit of that classic game. Locked arm in arm with his teammates, he would thrust forward into the subway car, trying to take possession before another team could storm in the opposite doors.

His group captain would shout, "Forward, men! We're taking this car to Rockaway!" And the opposing group captain would scream back, "Never! Rally, boys! It's Bronx Park or bust!"

Danton would struggle in the close-packed throng, a fixed smile on his face, worry lines etched around his mouth and eyes. His girl friend of the moment would say, "What's wrong, Edward? Aren't you having fun?"

"Sure I am," Danton would reply, gasping for breath.

"But you aren't!" the girl would cry, perplexed. "Don't you realize, Edward, that this is the way our ancestors worked off their aggressions? Historians say that the game of Subways averted an all-out hydrogen war. We have those same aggressions and we, too, must resolve them in a suitable social context."

"Yeah, I know," Edward Danton would say. "I really do enjoy this. I—oh, Lord!"

For at that moment, a third group would come pounding in, arms locked, chanting, "Canarsie, Canarsie, Canarsie!"

In that way, he would lose another girl friend, for there was obviously no future in Danton. Lack of Fit can never be disguised. It was obvious that Danton would never be happy in the New York suburbs which stretched from Rockport, Maine, to Norfolk, Virginia; nor in any other suburbs, for that matter.

Danton tried to cope with his problems, in vain. Other strains started to show. He began to develop astigmatism from the pro-

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jection of advertisements on his retina, and there was a constant ringing in his ears from the sing-swoop ads. His doctor warned that symptom analysis would never rid him of these psychosomatic ailments. No, what had to be treated was Danton's basic neurosis, his anti-sociality. But this Danton found impossible to deal with.

And so his thoughts turned irresistibly to escape. There was plenty of room for Earth's misfits out in space.

DURING the last two centuries, millions of psychotics, neurotics, psychopaths, and cranks of every kind and description had gone outward to the stars. The early ones had the Mikkelsen Drive to power their ships, and spent twenty or thirty years chugging from star system to star system. The newer ships were powered by GM subspatial torque converters, and made the same journey in a matter of months.

The stay-at-homes, being socially adjusted, bewailed the loss of anyone, but they welcomed the additional breeding room.

In his twenty-seventh year, Danton decided to leave Earth and take up pioneering. It was a tearful day when he gave his breeding certificate to his best friend, Al Trevor.

"Gee, Edward," Trevor said, turning the precious little certificate over and over in his hands, "you don't know what this means to Myrtle and me. We always wanted two kids. Now because of you —"

"Forget it," said Danton. "Where I'm going, I won't need any breeding permit. As a matter of fact, I'll probably find it impossible to breed," he added, the thought having just struck him.

"But won't that be frustrating for you?" Al asked, always solicitous for his friend's welfare.

"I guess so. Maybe after a while, though, I'll find a girl pioneer. And in the meantime, there's always sublimation."

"True enough. What substitute have you selected?"

"Vegetable gardening. I might as well be practical."

"You might as well," Al said, "Well, boy, good luck, boy."

Once the breeding certificate was gone, the die was cast. Danton plunged boldly ahead. In exchange for his Birthright, the government gave him unlimited free transportation and two years' basic equipment and provisions.

Danton left at once.

HE AVOIDED the more heavily populated areas, which were usually in the hands of rabid little groups.

He wanted no part of a place like Korani II, for instance, where

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a giant calculator had instituted a reign of math.

Nor was he interested in Heil V, where a totalitarian population of 342 was earnestly planning ways and means of conquering the Galaxy.

He skirted the Farming Worlds, dull, restrictive places given to extreme health theories and practices.

When he came to Hedonia, he considered settling on that notorious planet. But the men of Hedonia were said to be short-lived, although no one denied their enjoyment while they *did* live.

Danton decided in favor of the long haul, and journeyed on.

He passed the Mining Worlds, somber, rocky places sparsely populated by gloomy, bearded men given to sudden violence. And he came at last to the New Territories. These unpeopled worlds were past Earth's farthest frontier. Danton scanned several before he found one with no intelligent life whatsoever.

It was a calm and watery place, dotted with sizable islands, lush with jungle green and fertile with fish and game. The ship's captain duly notarized Danton's claim to the planet, which Danton called New Tahiti. A quick survey showed a large island superior to the rest. Here he was landed, and here he proceeded to set up his camp.

There was much to be done at first. Danton constructed a house out of branches and woven grass, near a white and gleaming beach. He fashioned a fishing spear, several snares and a net. He planted his vegetable garden and was gratified to see it thrive under the tropic sun, nourished by warm rains which fell every morning between seven and seven-thirty.

All in all, New Tahiti was a paradisical place and Danton should have been very happy there. But there was one thing wrong.

The vegetable garden, which he had thought would provide first-class sublimation, proved a dismal failure. Danton found himself thinking about women at all hours of the day and night, and spending long hours crooning to himself — love songs, of course — beneath a great orange tropic moon.

This was unhealthy. Desperately he threw himself into other recognized forms of sublimation; painting came first, but he rejected it to keep a journal, abandoned that and composed a sonata, gave that up and carved two enormous statues out of a local variety of soapstone, completed them and tried to think of something else to do.

There was nothing else to do. His vegetables took excellent care of themselves; being of Earth

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stock, they completely choked out all alien growths. Fish swam into his nets in copious quantities, and meat was his whenever he bothered to set a snare. He found again that he was thinking of women at all hours of the day and night—tall women, short women, white women, black women, brown women.

The day came when Danton found himself thinking favorably of Martian women, something no Terran had succeeded in doing before. Then he knew that something drastic had to be done.

But what? He had no way of signaling for help, no way of getting off New Tahiti. He was gloomily contemplating this when a black speck appeared in the sky to seaward.

He watched as it slowly grew larger, barely able to breathe for fear it would turn out to be a bird or huge insect. But the speck continued to increase in size and soon he could see pale jets, flaring and ebbing.

A spaceship had come! He was alone no longer!

THE ship took a long, slow, cautious time landing. Danton changed into his best *pareu,* a South Seas garment he had found peculiarly well adapted to the climate of New Tahiti. He washed, combed his hair carefully and watched the ship descend.

It was one of the ancient Mikkelsen Drive ships. Danton had thought that all of them were long retired from active service. But this ship, it was apparent, had been traveling for a long while. The hull was dented and scored, hopelessly archaic, yet with a certain indomitable look about it. Its name, proudly lettered on the bow, was *The Hutter People.*

When people come in from deep space, they are usually starved for fresh food. Danton gathered a great pile of fruit for the ship's passengers and had it tastefully arranged by the time *The Hutter People* had landed ponderously on the beach.

A narrow hatch opened and two men stepped out. They were armed with rifles and dressed in black from head to toe. Warily they looked around them.

Danton sprinted over. "Hey, welcome to New Tahiti! Boy, am I glad to see you folks! What's the latest news from—"

"Stand back!" shouted one of the men. He was in his fifties, tall and impossibly gaunt, his face seamed and hard. His icy blue eyes seemed to pierce Danton like an arrow; his rifle was leveled at Danton's chest. His partner was younger, barrel-chested, broad-faced, short and very powerfully built.

"Something wrong?" Danton asked, stopping.

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"What's your name?"

"Edward Danton."

"I'm Simeon Smith," the gaunt man said, "military commander of the Hutter people. This is Jedekiah Franker, second-in-command. How come you speak English?"

"I've always spoken English," said Danton. "Look, I—"

"Where are the others? Where are they hiding?"

"There aren't any others. Just me." Danton looked at the ship and saw the faces of men and women at every port. "I gathered this stuff for you folks." He waved his hand at the mound of fruit. "Thought you might want some fresh goods after being so long in space."

A pretty girl with short, tousled blonde hair appeared in the hatchway. "Can't we come out now, Father?"

"No!" Simeon said. "It's not safe. Get inside, Anita."

"I'll watch from here, then," she said, staring at Danton with frankly curious eyes.

Danton stared back and a faint and unfamiliar tremor ran through him.

SIMEON said, "We accept your offering. We will not, however, eat it."

"Why not?" Danton reasonably wanted to know.

"Because," said Jedekiah, "we don't know what poisons you people might try to feed us."

"Poisons? Look, let's sit down and talk this over."

"What do you think?" Jedekiah asked Simeon.

"Just what I expected," the military leader said. "Ingratiating, fawning, undoubtedly treacherous. His people won't show themselves. Waiting in ambush, I'll bet. I think an object lesson would be in order."

"Right," said Jedekiah, grinning. "Put the fear of civilization into them." He aimed his rifle at Danton's chest.

"Hey!" Danton yelped, backing away.

"But, Father," said Anita, "he hasn't done anything yet."

"That's the whole point. Shoot him and he *won't* do anything. The only good native is a dead native."

"This way," Jedekiah put in, "the rest will know we mean business."

"It isn't right!" Anita cried indignantly. "The Council—"

"—isn't in command now. An alien landfall constitutes an emergency. During such times, the military is in charge. We'll do what we think best. Remember Lan II!"

"Hold on now," Danton said. "You've got this all wrong. There's just me, no others, no reason to—"

A bullet kicked sand near his left foot. He sprinted for the pro-

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tection of the jungle. Another bullet whined close and a third cut a twig near his head as he plunged into the underbrush.

"There!" he heard Simeon roar. "That ought to teach them a lesson!"

Danton kept on running until he had put half a mile of jungle between himself and the pioneer ship.

He ate a light supper of the local variety of bananas and breadfruit, and tried to figure out what was wrong with the Hutters. Were they insane? They had seen that he was an Earthman, alone and unarmed, obviously friendly. Yet they had fired at him — as an object lesson. A lesson for whom? For the dirty natives, whom they wanted to teach a lesson . . .

That was it! Danton nodded emphatically to himself. The Hutters must have thought he was a native, an aboriginal, and that his tribe was lurking in the bush, waiting for a chance to massacre the new arrivals! It wasn't too rash an assumption, really. Here he was on a distant planet, without a spaceship, wearing only a loincloth and tanned a medium bronze. He was probably just what they thought a native should look like on a wilderness planet like this!

"But where," Danton asked himself, "do they think I learned English?"

THE whole thing was ridiculous. He started walking back to the ship, sure he could clear up the misunderstanding in a few minutes. But after a couple yards, he stopped.

Evening was approaching. Behind him, the sky was banked in white and gray clouds. To seaward, a deep blue haze advanced steadily on the land. The jungle was filled with ominous noises, which Danton had long ago found to be harmless. But the new arrivals might not think so.

These people were trigger-happy, he reminded himself. No sense barging in on them too fast and inviting a bullet.

So he moved cautiously through the tangled jungle growth, a silent, tawny shape blending into the jungle browns and greens. When he reached the vicinity of the ship, he crawled through the dense undergrowth until he could peer down on the sloping beach.

The pioneers had finally come out of their ship. There were several dozen men and women and a few children. All were dressed in heavy black cloth and perspiring in the heat. They had ignored his gift of local fruit. Instead, an aluminum table had been spread with the spaceship's monotonous provisions.

On the periphery of the crowd, Danton saw several men with rifles and ammunition belts. They

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were evidently on guard, keeping close watch on the jungle and glancing apprehensively overhead at the darkening sky.

Simeon raised his hands. There was immediate silence.

"Friends," the military leader orated, "we have come at last to our long-awaited home! Behold, here is a land of milk and honey, a place of bounty and abundance. Was it not worth the long voyage, the constant danger, the endless search?"

"Yes, brother!" the people responded.

Simeon held up his hands again for silence. "No civilized man has settled upon this planet. We are the first and therefore the place is ours. But there are perils, my friends! Who knows what strange monsters the jungle hides?"

"Nothing larger than a chipmunk," Danton muttered to himself. "Why don't they ask me? I'd tell them."

"Who knows what leviathan swims in the deep?" Simeon continued. "We *do* know one thing: There is an aboriginal people here, naked and savage, undoubtedly cunning, ruthless and amoral, as aboriginals always are. Of these we must beware. We will live in peace with them, if they will let us. We will bring to them the fruits of civilization and the flowers of culture. They may profess friendship, but always remember this, friends: No one can tell what goes on in a savage heart. Their standards are not ours; their morals are not ours. We cannot trust them; we must be forever on guard. And if in doubt, *we* must shoot first! Remember Lan II!"

EVERYBODY applauded, sang a hymn and began their evening meal. As night fell, searchlights came on from the ship, making the beach bright as day. The sentries paced up and down, shoulders hunched nervously, rifles ready.

Danton watched the settlers shake out their sleeping bags and retire under the bulge of the ship. Even their fear of sudden attack couldn't force them to spend another night inside the ship, when there was fresh air to breathe outside.

The great orange moon of New Tahiti was half-hidden by high-flying night clouds. The sentries paced and swore, and moved closer together for mutual comfort and protection. They began firing at the jungle sounds and blasting at shadows.

Danton crept back into the jungle. He retired for the night behind a tree, where he would be safe from stray bullets. This evening had not seemed the time for straightening things out. The Hutters were too jumpy. It would be

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better, he decided, to handle the matter by daylight, in a simple, straightforward, reasonable fashion.

The trouble was, the Hutters hardly seemed reasonable.

In the morning, though, everything looked more promising. Danton waited until the Hutters had finished their breakfast, then strolled into view at the edge of the beach.

"Halt!" every one of the sentries barked.

"That savage is back!" called a settler.

"Mummy," cried a little boy, "don't let the nasty bad man eat me!"

"Don't worry, dear," the boy's mother said. "Your father has a rifle for shooting savages."

Simeon rushed out of the spaceship and glared at Danton. "All right, you! Come forward!"

Danton stepped gingerly across the beach, his skin tingling with nervous expectation. He walked to Simeon, keeping his empty hands in sight.

"I am the leader of these people," Simeon said, speaking very slowly, as if to a child. "I the big chief fella. You big fella chief your people?"

"There's no need to talk that way," Danton said. "I can hardly understand you. I told you yesterday that I haven't any people. There's just me."

SIMEON'S hard face grew white with anger. "Unless you're honest with me, you're going to regret it. Now — where is your tribe?"

"I'm an Earthman," Danton yelled. "Are you deaf? Can't you hear how I talk?"

A stooped little man with white hair and great horn-rimmed glasses came over with Jedekiah. "Simeon," the little man said, "I don't believe I have met our guest."

"Professor Baker," said Simeon, "this savage here claims he's an Earthman and he says his name is Edward Danton."

The professor glanced at Danton's *pareu*, his tanned skin and calloused feet. "You are an Earthman?" he asked Danton.

"Of course."

"Who carved those stone statues up the beach?"

"I did," Danton said, "but it was just therapy. You see —"

"Obviously primitive work. That stylization, those noses —"

"It was accidental, then. Look, a few months ago I left Earth in a spaceship—"

"How was it powered?" Professor Baker asked.

"By a GM subspatial torque converter." Baker nodded, and Danton went on. "Well, I wasn't interested in places like Korani or Heil V, and Hedonia seemed too rich for my blood. I passed

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up the Mining Worlds and the Farming Worlds, and had the government ship drop me here. The planet's registered as New Tahiti, in my name. But I was getting pretty lonely, so I'm glad you folks came."

"Well, Professor?" Simeon said. "What do you think?"

"Amazing," Baker murmured, "truly amazing. His grasp of colloquial English bespeaks a fairly high level of intelligence, which points up a phenomenon frequently met with in savage societies, namely, an unusually well-developed power of mimicry. Our friend Danta (as his original, uncorrupted name must have been) will probably be able to tell us many tribal legends, myths, songs, dances —"

"But I'm an Earthman!"

"No, my poor friend," the Professor corrected gently, "you are not. Obviously you have *met* an Earthman. Some trader, I daresay, stopping for repairs."

Jedekiah said, "There's evidence that a spaceship once landed here briefly."

"Ah," said Professor Baker, beaming. "Confirmation of my hypothesis."

"That was the government ship," Danton explained. "It dropped me off here."

"It is interesting to note," said Professor Baker in his lecturing voice, "how his almost-plausible story lapses into myth at various crucial points. He claims that the ship was powered by a 'GM subspatial torque converter'— which is nonsense syllabification, since the only deep-space drive is the Mikkelsen. He claims that the journey from Earth was made in a matter of months (since his untutored mind cannot conceive of a journey lasting years), although we know that no space drive, even theoretically, can achieve that."

"IT WAS probably developed after you people left Earth," Danton said. "How long have you been gone?"

"The Hutter spaceship left Earth one hundred and twenty years ago," Baker replied condescendingly. "We are mostly fourth and fifth generation. Note also," Baker said to Simeon and Jedekiah, "his attempt to think up plausible place-names. Words such as Korani, Heil, Hedonia appeal to his sense of onomatopoeia. That there are no such places doesn't disturb him."

"There are!" Danton said indignantly.

"Where?" Jedekiah challenged. "Give me the coordinates."

"How should I know? I'm no navigator. I think Heil was near Boötes, or maybe it was Cassiopeia. No, I'm pretty sure it was Boötes —"

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"I'm sorry, friend," said Jedekiah. "It may interest you to know that I'm the ship's navigator. I can show you the star atlases and charts. Those places aren't on them."

"Your charts are a hundred years out of date!"

"Then so are the stars," Simeon said. "Now, Danta, where is your tribe? Why do they hide from us? What are they planning?"

"This is preposterous," Danton protested. "What can I do to convince you? I'm an Earthman. I was born and raised —"

"That's enough," Simeon cut in. "If there's one thing we Hutters won't stand for, it's backtalk from natives. Out with it, Danta. *Where are your people?*"

"There's only me," Danton insisted.

"Tight-mouthed?" Jedekiah gritted. "Maybe a taste of the blacksnake whip—"

"Later, later," Simeon said. "His tribe'll come around for handouts. Natives always do. In the meantime, Danta, you can join that work gang over there, unloading the supplies."

"No, thanks," said Danton. "I'm going back to—"

Jedekiah's fist lashed out, catching Danton on the side of the jaw. He staggered, barely keeping his footing.

"The chief said *no backtalk!*" Jedekiah roared. "Why are you natives always so bone-lazy? You'll be paid as soon as we unload the beads and calico. Now get to work."

That seemed to be the last word on the subject. Dazed and unsure, much like millions of natives before him on a thousand different worlds, Danton joined the long line of colonists passing goods out of the ship.

BY LATE afternoon, the unloading was done and the settlers were relaxed on the beach. Danton sat apart from them, trying to think his situation through. He was deep in thought when Anita came to him with a canteen of water.

"Do *you* think I'm a native?" he asked.

She sat down beside him and said, "I really don't see what else you could be. Everyone knows how fast a ship can travel and—"

"Times have changed since your people left Earth. They weren't in space all that time, were they?"

"Of course not. The Hutter ship went to H'gastro I, but it wasn't fertile enough, so the next generation moved to Ktedi. But the corn mutated and almost wiped them out, so they went to Lan II. They thought that would be a permanent home."

"What happened?"

"The natives," said Anita sadly.

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"I guess they were friendly enough, at first, and everyone thought the situation was well in hand. Then, one day, we were at war with the entire native population. They only had spears and things, but there were too many of them, so the ship left again and we came here."

"Hmm," Danton said. "I see why you're so nervous about aboriginals."

"Well, of course. While there's any possibility of danger, we're under military rule. That means my father and Jedekiah. But as soon as the emergency is past, our regular Hutter government takes over."

"Who runs that?"

"A council of Elders," Anita said, "men of good-will, who detest violence. If you and your people are really peaceable —"

"I haven't any people," Danton said wearily.

"— then you'll have every opportunity to prosper under the rule of the Elders," she finished.

They sat together and watched the sunset. Danton noticed how the wind stirred her hair, blowing it silkily across her forehead, and how the afterglow of the sun outlined and illuminated the line of her cheek and lip. He shivered and told himself it was the sudden chill of evening. And Anita, who had been talking animatedly about her childhood, found diffi-

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culty in completing her sentences, or even keeping her train of thought.

After a while, their hands strayed together. Their fingertips touched and clung. For a long time, they said nothing at all. And at last, gently and lingeringly, they kissed.

"What the hell is going on here?" a loud voice demanded.

DANTON looked up and saw a burly man standing over him, his powerful head silhouetted black against the moon, his fists on his hips.

"Please, Jedekiah," Anita said. "Don't make a scene."

"Get up," Jedekiah ordered Danton, in an ominously quiet voice. "Get up on your feet."

Danton stood up, his hands half-clenched into fists, waiting.

"You," Jedekiah said to Anita, "are a disgrace to your race and to the whole Hutter people. Are you crazy? You can't mess around with a dirty native and still keep any self-respect." He turned to Danton. "And you gotta learn something and learn it good. *Natives don't fool with Hutter women!* I'm going to impress that little lesson on you right here and now."

There was a brief scuffle and Jedekiah found himself sprawled on his back.

"Hurry!" Jedekiah shouted. *"The natives are revolting!"*

An alarm bell from the spaceship began to peal. Sirens wailed in the night. The women and children, long trained for such an emergency, trooped back into the spaceship. The men were issued rifles, machine guns and hand grenades, and began to advance on Danton.

"It's just man to man," Danton called out. "We had a disagreement, that's all. There's no natives or anything. Just me."

The foremost Hutter commanded, "Anita, quick, get back!"

"I didn't see any natives," the girl said staunchly. "And it wasn't really Danta's fault —"

"Get back!"

She was pulled out of the way. Danton dived into the bushes before the machine guns opened up.

He crawled on all fours for fifty yards, then broke into a dead run.

Fortunately, the Hutters were not pursuing. They were interested only in guarding their ship and holding their beachhead and a narrow stretch of jungle. Danton heard gunfire throughout the night and loud shouts and frantic cries.

"There goes one!"

"Quick, turn the machine gun! They're behind us!"

"There! There! I got one!"

"No, he got away! There he

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goes . . . But look, up in the tree!"

"Fire, man, fire!"

ALL NIGHT, Danton listened as the Hutters repulsed the attacks of imaginary savages.

Toward dawn, the firing subsided. Danton estimated that a ton of lead had been expended, hundreds of trees decapitated, acres of grass trampled into mud. The jungle stank of cordite.

He fell into a fitful slumber.

At midday, he awakened and heard someone moving through the underbrush. He retreated into the jungle and made a meal for himself out of a local variety of bananas and mangoes. Then he decided to think things over.

But no thoughts came. His mind was filled with Anita and with grief over her loss.

All that day, he wandered disconsolately through the jungle, and in the late afternoon heard again the sound of someone moving through the underbrush.

He turned to go deeper into the island. Then he heard someone calling his name.

"Danta! Danta! Wait!"

It was Anita. Danton hesitated, not sure what to do. She might have decided to leave her people, to live in the green jungle with him. But more realistically, she might have been sent out as a decoy, leading a party of men to destroy him. How could he know where her loyalties lay?

"Danta! Where are you?"

Danton reminded himself that there could never be anything between them. Her people had shown what they thought of natives. They would always distrust him, forever try to kill him . . .

"*Please*, Danta!"

Danton shrugged his shoulders and walked toward her voice.

They met in a little clearing. Anita's hair was disheveled and her khakis were torn by the jungle briars, but for Danton there could never be a lovelier woman. For an instant, he believed that she had come to join him, flee with him.

Then he saw armed men fifty yards behind her.

"It's all right," Anita said. "They're not going to kill you. They just came along to guard me."

"Guard you? From *me?*" Danton laughed hollowly.

"They don't know you as I do," Anita said. "At the Council meeting today, I told them the truth."

"You did?"

"Of course. That fight wasn't your fault and I told everybody so. I told them you fought only to defend yourself. And Jedekiah lied. No pack of natives attacked him. There was only you, and I told them this."

"Good girl," Danton said fer-

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vently. "Did they believe you?"

"I think so. I explained that the native attack came later."

—

DANTON groaned. "Look, how could there be a native attack when there aren't any natives?"

"But there are," Anita said. "I heard them shouting."

"Those were your own people." Danton tried to think of something that would convince her. If he couldn't convince this one girl, how could he possibly convince the rest of the Hutters?

And then he had it. It was a very simple proof, but its effect would have to be overwhelming.

"You actually believe there was a full-scale native attack," Danton stated.

"Of course."

"How many natives?"

"I heard you outnumbered us by at least ten to one."

"And we were armed?"

"You certainly were."

"Then how," Danton asked triumphantly, "do you account for the fact that *not a single Hutter was wounded!*"

She stared at him wide-eyed. "But, Danta dear, many of the Hutters were wounded, some seriously. It's a wonder no one was killed in all that fighting!"

Danton felt as though the ground had been kicked out from under him. For a terrifying minute, he believed her. The Hutters were so certain! Perhaps he did have a tribe, after all, hundreds of bronzed savages like himself, hidden in the jungle, waiting . . .

"That trader who taught you English," Anita said, "must have been a very unscrupulous character. It's against interstellar law, you know, to sell firearms to natives. Someday he'll be caught and —"

"Firearms?"

"Certainly. You couldn't use them very accurately, of course. But Simeon said that sheer firepower — "

"I suppose all your casualties were from gunshot wounds."

"Yes. The men didn't let you get close enough to use knives and spears."

"I see," Danton said. His proof was utterly demolished. But he felt enormously relieved at having regained his sanity. The disorganized Hutter soldiery had ranged around the jungle, firing at everything that moved — each other. Of course they had gotten into trouble. It was more than a wonder that some of them hadn't been killed. It was a miracle.

"But I explained that they couldn't blame you," said Anita. "You were attacked first and your own people must have thought you were in danger. The Elders thought this was probable."

"Nice of them," Danton said.

"They want to be reasonable.

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After all, they realize that natives are human beings just like ourselves."

"ARE you sure of that?" Danton asked, with feeble irony.

"Of course. So the Elders held a big meeting on native policy and decided it once and for all. We're setting aside a thousand acres as a reservation for you and your people. That should be plenty of room, shouldn't it? The men are putting up the boundary posts now. You'll live peacefully in your reservation and we'll live in our own part of the island."

"*What?*" Danton said.

"And to seal the pledge," Anita continued, "the Elders asked you to accept this." She handed him a roll of parchment.

"What is it?"

"It's a peace treaty, declaring the end of the Sutter-New Tahitian war, and pledging our respective peoples to eternal amity."

Numbly, Danton accepted the parchment. He saw that the men who had accompanied Anita were setting red and black striped posts into the ground. They sang as they worked, happy to have reached a solution for the native problem so quickly and easily.

"But don't you think," Danton asked, "that perhaps — ah — assimilation might be a better solution?"

"I suggested it," Anita said, blushing.

"You did? You mean that you would — "

"Of course I would," said Anita, not looking at him. "I think the amalgamation of two strong races would be a fine and wonderful thing. And, Danta, what wonderful stories and legends you could have told the children!"

"I could have showed them how to fish and hunt," Danton said, "and which plants are edible, and things like that."

"And all your colorful tribal songs and dances." Anita sighed. "It would have been wonderful. I'm sorry, Danta."

"But something must be possible! Can't I talk to the Elders? Isn't there anything I can do?"

"Nothing," Anita said. "I'd run away with you, Danta, but they'd track us down, no matter how long it took."

"They'd never find us," Danton promised.

"Perhaps. I'd be willing to take the chance."

"Darling!"

"But I can't. Your poor people, Danta! The Hutters would take hostages, kill them if I weren't returned."

"I don't have any people! I don't, damn it!"

"It's sweet of you to say that," Anita said tenderly. "But lives cannot be sacrificed just for the

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love of two individuals. You must tell your people not to cross the boundary lines, Danta. They'll be shot. Good-by, and remember, it is best to live in the path of peace."

She hurried away from him. Danton watched her go, angry at her noble sentiments which separated them for no reason at all, yet loving her for the love she showed his people. That his people were imaginary didn't count. It was the thought that mattered.

At last he turned and walked deep into the jungle.

HE stopped by a still pool of black water, overhung with giant trees and bordered by flowering ferns, and here he tried to plan the rest of his life. Anita was gone; all commerce with human beings was gone. He didn't need any of them, he told himself. He had his reservation. He could replant his vegetable garden, carve more statues, compose more sonatas, start another journal . . .

"To hell with that!" he shouted to the trees. He didn't *want* to sublimate any longer. He wanted Anita and he wanted to live with humans. He was tired of being alone.

What could he do about it?

There didn't seem to be anything. He leaned back against a tree and stared at New Tahiti's impossibly blue sky. If only the Hutters weren't so superstitious, so afraid of natives, so . . .

And then it came to him, a plan so absurd, so dangerous . . .

"It's worth a try," Danton said to himself, "even if they kill me."

He trotted off toward the Hutter boundary line.

A sentry saw him as he neared the vicinity of the spaceship and leveled his rifle. Danton raised both arms.

"Don't fire! I have to speak with your leaders!"

"Get back on your reservation," the sentry warned. "Get back or I'll shoot."

"I have to speak to Simeon," Danton stated, holding his ground.

"Orders is orders," said the sentry, taking aim.

"Just a minute." Simeon stepped out of the ship, frowning deeply. "What is all this?"

"That native came back," the sentry said. "Shall I pop him, sir?"

"What do you want?" Simeon asked Danton.

"I have come here to bring you," Danton roared, *"a declaration of war!"*

THAT woke up the Hutter camp. In a few minutes, every man, woman and child had gathered near the spaceship. The

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Elders, a council of old men distinguished by their long white beards, were standing to one side.

"You accepted the peace treaty," Simeon pointed out.

"I had a talk with the other chiefs of the island," Danton said, stepping forward. "We feel the treaty is not fair. New Tahiti is ours. It belonged to our fathers and to our fathers' fathers. Here we have raised our children, sown our corn and reaped the breadfruit. We will not live on the reservation!"

"Oh, Danta!" Anita cried, appearing from the spaceship. "I asked you to bring peace to your people!"

"They wouldn't listen," Danton said. "All the tribes are gathering. Not only my own people, the Cynochi, but the Drovati, the Lorognasti, the Retellsmbroichi and the Vitelli. Plus, naturally, their sub-tribes and dependencies."

"How many are you?" Simeon asked.

"Fifty or sixty thousand. Of course, we don't all have rifles. Most of us will have to rely on more primitive weapons, such as poisoned arrows and darts."

A nervous murmur arose from the crowd.

"Many of us will be killed," Danton said stonily. "We do not care. Every New Tahitian will fight like a lion. We are a thousand to your one. We have cousins on the other islands who will join us. No matter what the cost in human life and misery, we will drive you into the sea. I have spoken."

He turned and started back into the jungle, walking with stiff dignity.

"Shall I pop him now, sir?" the sentry begged.

"Put down that rifle, you fool!" Simeon snapped. "Wait, Danta! Surely we can come to terms. Bloodshed is senseless."

"I agree," Danton said soberly.

"What do you want?"

"Equal rights!"

The Elders went into an immediate conference. Simeon listened to them, then turned to Danton.

"That may be possible. Is there anything else?"

"Nothing," Danton said. "Except, naturally, an alliance between the ruling clan of the Hutters and the ruling clan of the New Tahitians, to seal the bargain. Marriage would be best."

AFTER going into conference again, the Elders gave their instructions to Simeon. The military chief was obviously disturbed. The cords stood out on his neck, but with an effort he controlled himself, bowed his agreement to the Elders and marched up to Danton.

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"The Elders have authorized me," he said, "to offer you an alliance of blood brotherhood. You and I, representing the leading clans of our peoples, will mingle our blood together in a beautiful and highly symbolic ceremony, then break bread, take salt — "

"Sorry," Danton said. "We New Tahitians don't hold with that sort of thing. It has to be marriage."

"But damn it all, man — "

"That is my last word."

"We'll never accept! Never!"

"Then it's war," Danton declared and walked into the jungle.

He was in a mood for making war. But how, he asked himself, does a single native fight against a spaceship full of armed men?

He was brooding on this when Simeon and Anita came to him through the jungle.

"All right," Simeon said angrily. "The Elders have decided. We Hutters are sick of running from planet to planet. We've had this problem before and I suppose we'd just go somewhere else and have it again. We're sick and tired of the whole native problem, so I guess — " he gulped hard, but manfully finished the sentence — "we'd better assimilate. At least, that's what the Elders think. Personally, I'd rather fight."

"You'd lose," Danton assured him, and at that moment he felt

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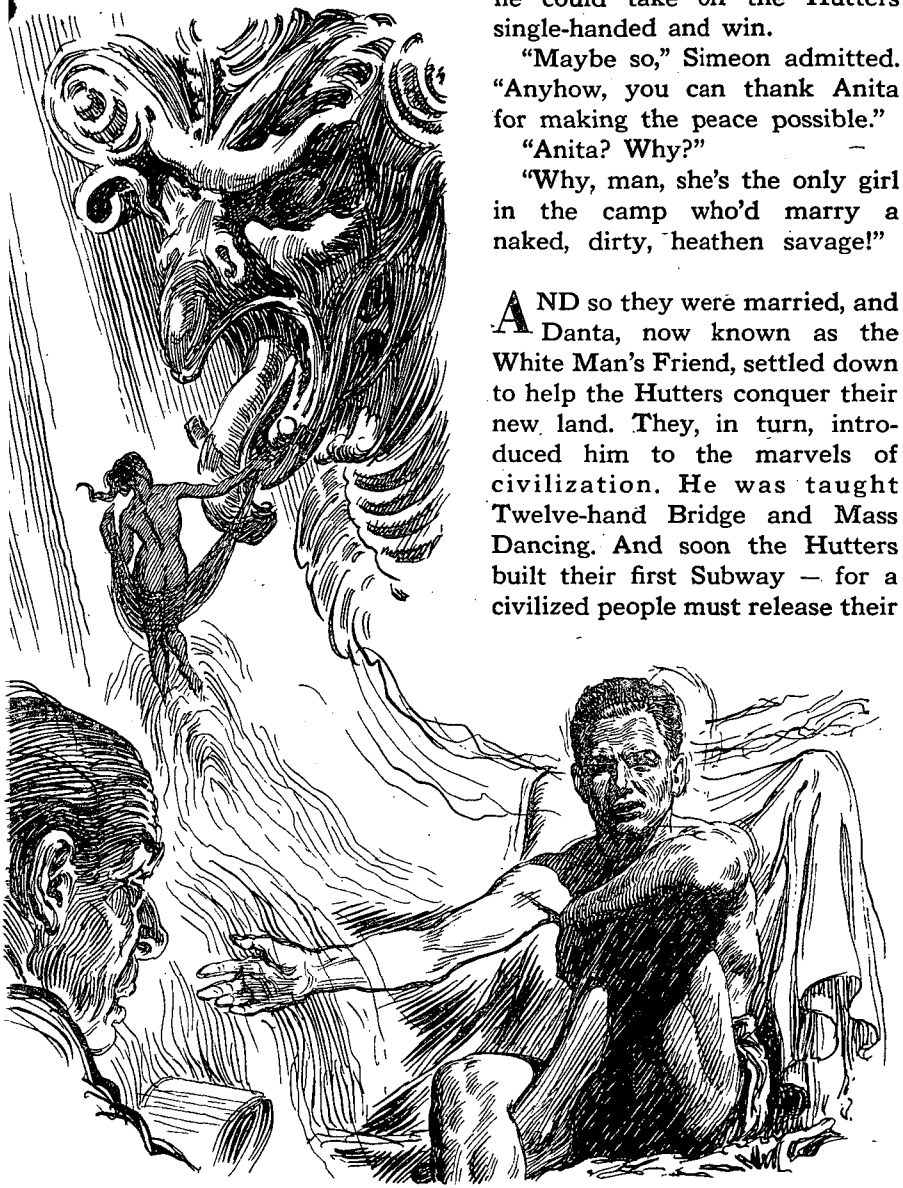

he could take on the Hutters single-handed and win.

"Maybe so," Simeon admitted. "Anyhow, you can thank Anita for making the peace possible."

"Anita? Why?"

"Why, man, she's the only girl in the camp who'd marry a naked, dirty, heathen savage!"

AND so they were married, and Danta, now known as the White Man's Friend, settled down to help the Hutters conquer their new land. They, in turn, introduced him to the marvels of civilization. He was taught Twelve-hand Bridge and Mass Dancing. And soon the Hutters built their first Subway — for a civilized people must release their

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aggressions — and that game was shown to Danta, too.

He tried to master the spirit of the classic Earth pastime, but it was obviously beyond the comprehension of his savage soul. Civilization stifled him, so Danta and his wife moved across the planet, always following the frontier, staying far from the amenities of civilization.

Anthropologists frequently came to visit him. They recorded all the stories he told his children, the ancient and beautiful legends of New Tahiti — tales of sky gods and water demons, fire sprites and woodland nymphs, and how Katamandura was ordered to create the world out of nothingness in just three days, and what his reward for this was, and what Jevasi said to Hootmenlati when they met in the underworld, and the strange outcome of this meeting.

The anthropologists noted similarities between these legends and certain legends of Earth, and several interesting theories were put forth. And they were interested in the great sandstone statues on the main island of New Tahiti, weird and haunting works which no viewer could forget, clearly the work of a pre-New Tahitian race, of whom no trace could ever be found.

But most fascinating of all for the scientific workers was the problem of the New Tahitians themselves. Those happy, laughing, bronzed savages, bigger, stronger, handsomer and healthier than any other race, had melted away at the coming of the white man. Only a few of the older Hutters could remember having met them in any numbers and their tales were considered none too reliable.

"My people?" Danta would say, when questioned. "Ah, they could not stand the white man's diseases, the white man's mechanical civilization, the white man's harsh and repressive ways. They are in a happier place now, in Valhoola beyond the sky. And someday I shall go there, too."

And white men, hearing this, experienced strangely guilty feelings and redoubled their efforts to show kindness to Danta, the Last Native.

—ROBERT SHECKLEY

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Of All Possible Worlds

By WILLIAM TENN

Changing the world is simple; the trick is to do it before you have a chance to undo it!

Illustrated by GAUGHAN

IT WAS a good job and Max Alben knew whom he had to thank for it—his great-grandfather.

"Good old Giovanni Albeni," he muttered as he hurried into the laboratory slightly ahead of the escorting technicians, all of them, despite the excitement of the moment, remembering to bob their heads deferentially at the half-dozen full-fleshed and hard-faced men lolling on the couches that had been set up around the time machine.

He shrugged rapidly out of his rags, as he had been instructed in the anteroom, and stepped into the housing of the enormous mechanism. This was the first time he had seen it, since he had been taught how to operate it on

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a dummy model, and now he stared at the great transparent coils and the susurrating energy bubble with much respect.

This machine, the pride and the hope of 2089, was something almost outside his powers of comprehension. But Max Alben knew how to run it, and he knew, roughly, what it was supposed to accomplish. He knew also that this was the first backward journey of any great duration and, being scientifically unpredictable, might well be the death of him.

"Good old Giovanni Albeni," he muttered again affectionately.

If his great-grandfather had not volunteered for the earliest time-travel experiments way back in the nineteen-seventies, back even before the Blight, it would never have been discovered that he and his seed possessed a great deal of immunity to extra-temporal blackout.

And if that had not been discovered, the ruling powers of Earth, more than a century later, would never have plucked Max Alben out of an obscure civil-service job as a relief guard at the North American Chicken Reservation to his present heroic and remunerative eminence. He would still be patrolling the barbed wire that surrounded the three white leghorn hens and two roosters — about one-sixth of the known livestock wealth of the Western Hemisphere — thoroughly content with the half-pail of dried apricots he received each and every payday.

No, if his great-grandfather had not demonstrated long ago his unique capacity for remaining conscious during time travel, Max Alben would not now be shifting from foot to foot in a physics laboratory, facing the black market kings of the world and awaiting their final instructions with an uncertain and submissive grin.

MEN like O'Hara, who controlled mushrooms, Levney, the blackberry tycoon, Sorgasso, the packaged-worm monopolist — would black marketeers of their tremendous stature so much as waste a glance on someone like Alben ordinarily, let alone confer a lifetime pension on his wife and five children of a full spoonful each of non-synthetic sugar a day?

Even if he didn't come back, his family was provided for like almost no other family on Earth. This was a damn good job and he was lucky.

Alben noticed that Abd Sadha had risen from the straight chair at the far side of the room and was approaching him with a sealed metal cylinder in one hand.

"We've decided to add a further precaution at the last moment," the old man said. "That is, the scientists have suggested it

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and I have — er — I have given my approval."

The last remark was added with a slight questioning note as the Secretary-General of the United Nations looked back rapidly at the black market princes on the couches behind him. Since they stared back stonily, but offered no objection, he coughed in relief and returned to Alben.

"I am sure, young man, that I don't have to go into the details of your instructions once more. You enter the time machine and go back the duration for which it has been preset, a hundred and thirteen years, to the moment after the Guided Missile of 1976 was launched. It *is* 1976, isn't it?" he asked, suddenly uncertain.

"Yes, sir," one of the technicians standing by the time machine said respectfully. "The experiment with an atomic warhead guided missile that resulted in the Blight was conducted on this site on April 18, 1976." He glanced proudly at the unemotional men on the couches, very much like a small boy after completing a recitation before visiting dignitaries from the Board of Education.

"Just so." Abd Sadha nodded. "April 18, 1976. And on this site. You see, young man, you will materialize at the very moment and on the very spot where the remote-control station handling the missile was — er — handling the missile. You will be in a superb position, a superb position, to deflect the missile in its downward course and alter human history for the better. Very much for the better. Yes."

He paused, having evidently stumbled out of his thought sequence.

"And he pulls the red switch toward him," Gomez, the dandelion-root magnate, reminded him sharply, impatiently.

"Ah, yes, the red switch. He pulls the little red switch toward him. Thank you, Mr. Gomez, thank you very much, sir. He pulls the little red switch on the green instrument panel toward him, thus preventing the error that caused the missile to explode in the Brazilian jungle and causing it, instead, to explode somewhere in the mid-Pacific, as originally planned."

The Secretary-General of the United Nations beamed. "Thus preventing the Blight, making it nonexistent, as it were, producing a present-day world in which the Blight never occurred. That is correct, is it not, gentlemen?" he asked, turning anxiously again.

NONE of the half-dozen men on couches deigned to answer him. And Alben kept his eyes deferentially in their direction, too, as he had throughout this period of last-minute instruction.

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He knew who ruled his world — these stolid, well-fed men in clean garments with a minimum of patches, and where patches occurred, at least they were the color of the surrounding cloth.

Sadha might be Secretary-General of the United Nations, but that was still a civil-service job, only a few social notches higher than a chicken guard. His clothes were fully as ragged, fully as multi-colored, as those that Alben had stepped out of. And the gnawing in his stomach was no doubt almost as great.

"You understand, do you not, young man, that if anything goes wrong," Abd Sadha asked, his head nodding tremulously and anticipating the answer, "if anything unexpected, unprepared-for, occurs, you are not to continue with the experiment but return immediately?"

"He understands everything he has to understand," Gomez told him. "Let's get this thing moving."

The old man smiled again. "Yes. Of course, Mr. Gomez." He came up to where Alben stood in the entrance of the time machine and handed the sealed metal cylinder to him. "This is the precaution the scientists have just added. When you arrive at your destination, just before materializing, you will release it into the surrounding temporal medium. Our purpose here, as you no doubt —"

Levney sat up on his couch and snapped his fingers peremptorily. "I just heard Gomez tell you to get this thing moving, Sadha. And it isn't moving. We're busy men. We've wasted enough time."

"I was just trying to explain a crucial final fact," the Secretary-General apologized. "A fact which may be highly —"

"You've explained enough facts." Levney turned to the man inside the time machine. "Hey, fella. You. *Move!*"

Max Alben gulped and nodded violently. He darted to the rear of the machine and turned the dial which activated it.

flick!

IT WAS a good job and Mac Albin knew whom he had to thank for it — his great-grandfather.

"Good old Giovanni Albeni," he laughed as he looked at the morose faces of his two colleagues. Bob Skeat and Hugo Honek had done as much as he to build the tiny time machine in the secret lab under the helicopter garage, and they were fully as eager to go, but — unfortunately for them — they were not descended from the right ancestor.

Leisurely, he unzipped the richly embroidered garment that, as the father of two children, he was privileged to wear, and wriggled into the housing of the com-

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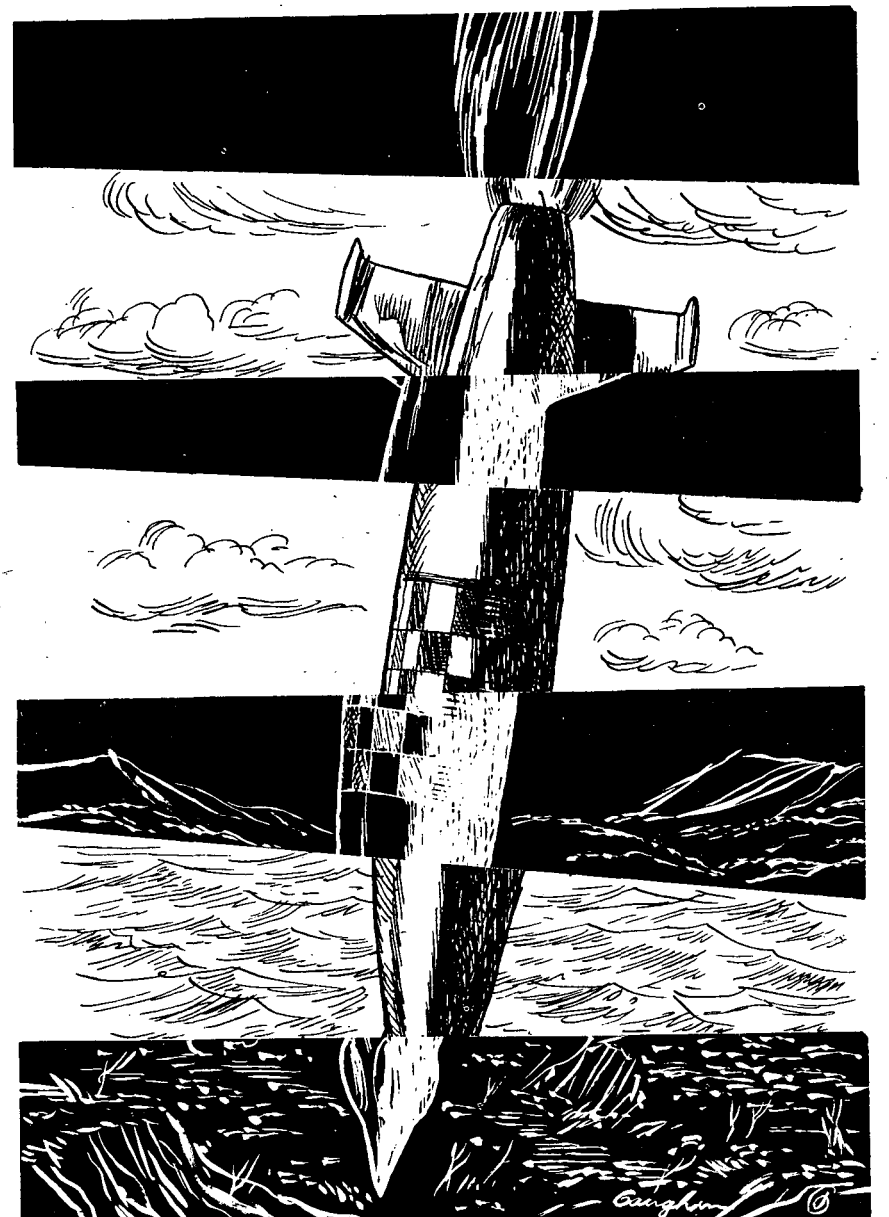

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plex little mechanism. This was hardly the first time he had seen it, since he'd been helping to build the device from the moment Honek had nodded and risen from the drafting board, and now he barely wasted a glance on the thumb-size translucent coils growing out of the almost microscopic energy bubbles which powered them.

This machine was the last hope of 2089, even if the world of 2089, as a whole, did not know of its existence and would try to prevent its being put into operation. But it meant a lot more to Mac Albin than merely saving a world. It meant an adventurous mission with the risk of death.

"Good old Giovanni Albeni," he laughed again happily.

If his great-grandfather had not volunteered for the earliest time-travel experiments way back in the nineteen-seventies, back even before the Epidemic, it would never have been discovered that he and his seed possessed a great deal of immunity to extra-temporal blackout.

And if that had not been discovered, the Albins would not have become physicists upon the passage of the United Nations law that everyone on Earth — absolutely without exception — had to choose a branch of research science in which to specialize. In the flabby, careful, life-guarding world the Earth had become, Mac Albin would never have been reluctantly selected by his two coworkers as the one to carry the forbidden banner of dangerous experiment.

No, if his great-grandfather had not demonstrated long ago his unique capacity for remaining conscious during time travel, Mac Albin would probably be a biologist today like almost everyone else on Earth, laboriously working out dreary gene problems instead of embarking on the greatest adventure Man had known to date.

Even if he didn't come back, he had at last found a socially useful escape from genetic responsibility to humanity in general and his own family in particular. This was a damn good job and he was lucky.

"Wait a minute, Mac," Skeat said and crossed to the other side of the narrow laboratory.

ALBIN and Honek watched him stuff several sheets of paper into a small metal box which he closed without locking.

"You will take care of yourself, won't you, Mac?" Hugo Honek pleaded. "Any time you feel like taking an unnecessary risk, remember that Bob and I will have to stand trial if you don't come back. We might be sentenced to complete loss of professional status and spend the rest of our

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lives supervising robot factories."

"Oh, it won't be that bad," Albin reassured him absent-mindedly from where he lay contorted inside the time machine. He watched Skeat coming toward him with the box.

Honek shrugged his shoulders. "It might be a lot worse than even that and you know it. The disappearance of a two-time father is going to leave an awful big vacancy in the world. One-timers, like Bob and me, are all over the place; if either of us dropped out of sight, it wouldn't cause nearly as much uproar."

"But Bob and you both tried to operate the machine," Albin reminded him. "And you blacked out after a fifteen-second temporal displacement. So I'm the only chance, the only way to stop the human race from dwindling and dwindling till it hits absolute zero, like that fat old Security Council seems willing for it to do."

"Take it easy, Mac," Bob Skeat said as he handed the metal box to Albin. "The Security Council is just trying to solve the problem in their way, the conservative way: a worldwide concentration on genetics research coupled with the maximum preservation of existing human lives, especially those that have a high reproductive potential. We three disagree with them; we've been skulking down here nights to solve it *our* way, and ours is a radical approach and plenty risky. That's the reason for the metal box—trying to cover one more explosive possibility."

Albin turned it around curiously. "How?"

"I sat up all last night writing the manuscript that's inside it. Look, Mac, when you go back to the Guided Missile Experiment of 1976 and push that red switch away from you, a lot of other things are going to happen than just deflecting the missile so that it will explode in the Brazilian jungle instead of the Pacific Ocean."

"Sure. I know. If it explodes in the jungle, the Epidemic doesn't occur. No Shapiro's Mumps."

Skeat jiggled his pudgy little face impatiently. "That's not what I mean. The Epidemic doesn't occur, but something else does. A new world, a different 2089, an alternate time sequence. It'll be a world in which humanity has a better chance to survive, but it'll be one with problems of its own. Maybe tough problems. Maybe the problems will be tough enough so that they'll get the same idea we did and try to go back to the same point in time to change them."

ALBIN laughed. "That's just looking for trouble."

"Maybe it is, but that's my job.

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Hugo's the designer of the time machine and you're the operator, but I'm the theoretical man in this research team. It's my job to look for trouble. So, just in case, I wrote a brief history of the world from the time the missile exploded in the Pacific. It tells why ours is the worst possible of futures. It's in that box."

"What do I do with it—hand it to the guy from the alternate 2089?"

The small fat man exasperatedly hit the side of the time machine with a well-cushioned palm. "You know better. There won't be any alternate 2089 until you push that red switch on the green instrument panel. The moment you do, our world, with all its slow slide to extinction, goes out and its alternate goes on—just like two electric light bulbs on a push-pull circuit. We and every single one of our artifacts, including the time machine, disappear. The problem is how to keep that manuscript from disappearing.

"Well, all you do, if I have this figured right, is shove the metal box containing the manuscript out into the surrounding temporal medium a moment before you materialize to do your job. That temporal medium in which you'll be traveling is something that exists independent of and autonomous to all possible futures. It's my hunch that something that's immersed in it will not be altered by a new time sequence."

"REMIND him to be careful, Bob," Honek rumbled. "He thinks he's Captain Blood and this is his big chance to run away to sea and become a swashbuckling pirate."

Albin grimaced in annoyance. "I *am* excited by doing something besides sitting in a safe little corner working out safe little abstractions for the first time in my life. But I know that this is a first experiment. Honestly, Hugo, I really have enough intelligence to recognize that simple fact. I know that if anything unexpected pops up, anything we didn't foresee, I'm supposed to come scuttling back and ask for advice."

"I hope you do," Bob Skeat sighed. "I hope you do know that. A twentieth century poet once wrote something to the effect that the world will end not with a bang, but a whimper. Well, our world is ending with a whimper. Try to see that it doesn't end with a bang, either."

"That I'll promise you," Albin said a trifle disgustedly. "It'll end with neither a bang *nor* a whimper. So long, Hugo. So long, Bob."

He twisted around, reaching overhead for the lever which activated the forces that drove the time machine.

flick!

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IT WAS strange, Max Alben reflected, that this time travel business, which knocked unconscious everyone who tried it, only made him feel slightly dizzy. That was because he was descended from Giovanni Albeni, he had been told. There must be some complicated scientific explanation for it, he decided — and that would make it none of his business. Better forget about it.

All around the time machine, there was a heavy gray murk in which objects were hinted at rather than stated definitely. It reminded him of patrolling his beat at the North American Chicken Reservation in a thick fog.

According to his gauges, he was now in 1976. He cut speed until he hit the last day of April, then cut speed again, drifting slowly backward to the eighteenth, the day of the infamous Guided Missile Experiment. Carefully, carefully, like a man handling a strange bomb made on a strange planet, he watched the center gauge until the needle came to rest against the thin etched line that indicated the exactly crucial moment. Then he pulled the brake and stopped the machine dead.

All he had to do now was materialize in the right spot, flash out and pull the red switch toward him. Then his well-paid assignment would be done.

But . . .

He stopped and scratched his dirt-matted hair. Wasn't there something he was supposed to do a second before materialization? Yes, that useless old windbag, Sadha, had given him a last instruction.

He picked up the sealed metal cylinder, walked to the entrance of the time machine and tossed it into the gray murk. A solid object floating near the entrance caught his eye. He put his arm out — whew, it was cold! — and pulled it inside.

A small metal box. Funny. What was it doing out there? Curiously, he opened it, hoping to find something valuable. Nothing but a few sheets of paper, Alben noted disappointedly. He began to read them slowly, very slowly, for the manuscript was full of a lot of long and complicated words, like a letter from one bookworm scientist to another.

The problems all began with the Guided Missile Experiment of 1976, he read. There had been a number of such experiments, but it was the one of 1976 that finally did the damage the biologists had been warning about. The missile with its deadly warhead exploded in the Pacific Ocean as planned, the physicists and the military men went home to study their notes, and the world shiv-

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ered once more over the approaching war and tried to forget about it.

But there was fallout, a radioactive rain several hundred miles to the north, and a small fishing fleet got thoroughly soaked by it. Fortunately, the radioactivity in the rain was sufficiently low to do little obvious physical damage: All it did was cause a mutation in the mumps virus that several of the men in the fleet were incubating at the time, having caught it from the children of the fishing town, among whom a minor epidemic was raging.

THE fleet returned to its home town, which promptly came down with the new kind of mumps. Dr. Llewellyn Shapiro, the only physician in town, was the first man to note that, while the symptoms of this disease were substantially milder than those of its unmutated parent, practically no one was immune to it and its effects on human reproductivity were truly terrible. Most people were completely sterilized by it. The rest were rendered much less capable of fathering or bearing offspring.

Shapiro's Mumps spread over the entire planet in the next few decades. It leaped across every quarantine erected; for a long time, it successfully defied all the vaccines and serums attempted against it. Then, when a vaccine was finally perfected, humanity discovered to its dismay that its generative powers had been permanently and fundamentally impaired.

Something had happened to the germ plasm. A large percentage of individuals were born sterile, and, of those who were not, one child was usually the most that could be expected, a two-child parent being quite rare and a three-child parent almost unknown.

Strict eugenic control was instituted by the Security Council of the United Nations so that fertile men and women would not be wasted upon non-fertile mates. Fertility was the most important avenue to social status, and right after it came successful genetic research.

Genetic research had the very best minds prodded into it; the lesser ones went into the other sciences. Everyone on Earth was engaged in some form of scientific research to some extent. Since the population was now so limited in proportion to the great resources available, all physical labor had long been done by robots. The government saw to it that everybody had an ample supply of goods and, in return, asked only that they experiment without any risk to their own lives — every human being was now a much-

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prized, highly guarded rarity.

There were less than a hundred thousand of them, well below the danger point, it had been estimated, where a species might be wiped out by a new calamity. Not that another calamity would be needed. Since the end of the Epidemic, the birth rate had been moving further and further behind the death rate. In another century . . .

That was why a desperate and secret attempt to alter the past was being made. This kind of world was evidently impossible.

Max Alben finished the manuscript and sighed. What a wonderful world! What a comfortable place to live!

He walked to the rear dials and began the process of materializing at the crucial moment on April 18, 1976.

flick!

IT WAS odd, Mac Albin reflected, that these temporal journeys, which induced coma in everyone who tried it, only made him feel slightly dizzy. That was because he was descended from Giovanni Albeni, he knew. Maybe there was some genetic relationship with his above-average fertility—might be a good idea to mention the idea to a biologist or two when he returned. *If* he returned.

All around the time machine, there was a soupy gray murk in which objects were hinted at rather than stated definitely. It reminded him of the problems of landing a helicopter in a thick fog when the robot butler had not been told to turn on the ground lights.

According to the insulated register, he was now in 1976. He lowered speed until he registered April, then maneuvered slowly backward through time to the eighteenth, the day of the infamous Guided Missile Experiment. Carefully, carefully, like an obstetrician supervising surgical robots at an unusually difficult birth, he watched the register until it rolled to rest against the notch that indicated the exactly crucial moment. Then he pushed a button and froze the machine where it was.

All he had to do now was materialize in the right spot, flash out and push the red switch from him. Then his exciting adventure would be over.

But . . .

He paused and tapped at his sleek chin. He was supposed to do something a second before materialization. Yes, that nervous theoretician, Bob Skeat, had given him a last suggestion.

He picked up the small metal box, twisted around to face the opening of the time machine and dropped it into the gray murk. A

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solid object floating near the opening attracted his attention. He shot his arm out — it was *cold*, as cold as they had figured — and pulled the object inside.

A sealed metal cylinder. Strange. What was it doing out there? Anxiously, he opened it, not daring to believe he'd find a document inside. Yes, that was exactly what it was, he saw excitedly. He began to read it rapidly, very rapidly, as if it were a newly published paper on neutrinos. Besides, the manuscript was written with almost painful simplicity, like a textbook composed by a stuffy pedagogue for the use of morons.

The problems all began with the Guided Missile Experiment of 1976, he read. There had been a number of such experiments, but it was the one of 1976 that finally did the damage the biologists had been warning about. The missile with its deadly warhead exploded in the Brazilian jungle through some absolutely unforgivable error in the remote-control station, the officer in charge of the station was reprimanded and the men under him court-martialed, and the Brazilian government was paid a handsome compensation for the damage.

BUT there had been more damage than anyone knew at the time. A plant virus, similar to the tobacco mosaic, had mutated under the impact of radioactivity. Five years later, it burst out of the jungle and completely wiped out every last rice plant on Earth. Japan and a large part of Asia became semi-deserts inhabited by a few struggling nomads.

Then the virus adjusted to wheat and corn — and famine howled in every street of the planet. All attempts by botanists to control the Blight failed because of the swiftness of its onslaught. And after it had fed, it hit again at a new plant and another and another.

Most of the world's non-human mammals had been slaughtered for food long before they could starve to death. Many insects, too, before they became extinct at the loss of their edible plants, served to assuage hunger to some small extent.

But the nutritive potential of Earth was steadily diminishing in a horrifying geometric progression. Recently, it had been observed, plankton — the tiny organism on which most of the sea's ecology was based — had started to disappear, and with its diminution, dead fish had begun to pile up on the beaches.

Mankind had lunged out desperately in all directions in an effort to survive, but nothing had worked for any length of time. Even the other planets of the

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Solar System, which had been reached and explored at a tremendous cost in remaining resources, had yielded no edible vegetation. Synthetics had failed to fill the prodigious gap.

In the midst of the sharply increasing hunger, social controls had pretty much dissolved. Pathetic attempts at rationing still continued, but black markets became the only markets, and black marketeers the barons of life. Starvation took the hindmost, and only the most agile economically lived in comparative comfort. Law and order were had only by those who could afford to pay for them and children of impoverished families were sold on the open market for a bit of food.

But the Blight was still adjusting to new plants and the food supply kept shrinking. In another century . . .

That was why the planet's powerful individuals had been persuaded to pool their wealth in a desperate attempt to alter the past. This kind of world was manifestly impossible.

Mac Albin finished the document and sighed. What a magnificent world! What an exciting place to live!

He dropped his hand on the side levers and began the process of materializing at the crucial moment on April 18, 1976.

flick!

AS THE equipment of the remote-control station began to take on a blurred reality all around him, Max Alben felt a bit of fear at what he was doing. The technicians, he remembered, the Secretary-General, even the black market kings, had all warned him not to go ahead with his instructions if anything unusual turned up. That was an awful lot of power to disobey: he knew he should return with this new information and let better minds work on it.

They with their easy lives, what did they know what existence had been like for such as he? Hunger, always hunger, scrabbling, servility, and more hunger. Every time things got really tight, you and your wife looking sideways at your kids and wondering which of them would bring the best price. Buying security for them, as he was now, at the risk of his life.

But in this other world, this other 2089, there was a state that took care of you and that treasured your children. A man like himself, with *five* children — why, he'd be a big man, maybe the biggest man on Earth! And he'd have robots to work for him and lots of food. Above all, lots and lots of food.

He'd even be a scientist — *everyone* was a scientist there, weren't they? — and he'd have a

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big laboratory all to himself. This other world had its troubles, but it was a lot nicer place than where he'd come from. He wouldn't return. He'd go through with it.

The fear left him and, for the first time in his life, Max Alben felt the sensation of power.

He materialized the time machine around the green instrument panel, sweating a bit at the sight of the roomful of military figures, despite the technicians' reassurances that all this would be happening too fast to be visible. He saw the single red switch pointing upward on the instrument panel. The switch that controlled the course of the missile. Now! Now to make a halfway decent world!

Max Alben pulled the little red switch toward him.

flick!

AS THE equipment of the remote-control station began to oscillate into reality all around him, Mac Albin felt a bit of shame at what he was doing. He'd promised Bob and Hugo to drop the experiment at any stage if a new factor showed up. He knew he should go back with this new information and have all three of them kick it around.

But what would they be able to tell him, they with their blissful adjustment to their thoroughly blueprinted lives? They, at least, had been ordered to marry women they could live with; he'd drawn a female with whom he was completely incompatible in any but a genetic sense. Genetics! He was tired of genetics and the sanctity of human life, tired to the tip of his uncalloused fingers, tired to the recesses of his unused muscles. He was tired of having to undertake a simple adventure like a thief in the night.

But in this other world, this other 2089, someone like himself would be a monarch of the black market, a suzerain of chaos, making his own rules, taking his own women. So what if the weaklings, those unfit to carry on the race, went to the wall? His kind wouldn't.

He'd formed a pretty good idea of the kind of men who ruled that other world, from the document in the sealed metal cylinder. The black marketeers had not even read it. Why, the fools had obviously been duped by the technicians into permitting the experiment; they had not grasped the idea that an alternate time track would mean their own non-existence.

This other world had its troubles, but it was certainly a livelier place than where he'd come from. It deserved a chance. Yes, that was how he felt: his world was drowsily moribund; this alternate was starving but manag-

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ing to flail away at destiny. It *deserved* a chance.

Albin decided that he was experiencing renunciation and felt proud.

He materialized the time machine around the green instrument panel, disregarding the roomful of military figures since he knew they could not see him. The single red switch pointed downward on the instrument panel. That was the gimmick that controlled the course of the missile. Now! Now to make a halfway interesting world!

Mac Albin pushed the little red switch from him.

flick!

Now! Now to make a halfway decent world!

Max Alben pulled the little red switch toward him.

flick!

Now! Now to make a halfway interesting world!

Mac Albin pushed the little red switch from him.

flick!

. . . pulled the little red switch toward him.

flick!

. . . pushed the little red switch from him.

flick!

. . . toward him.

flick!

. . . from him.

flick!

—WILLIAM TENN

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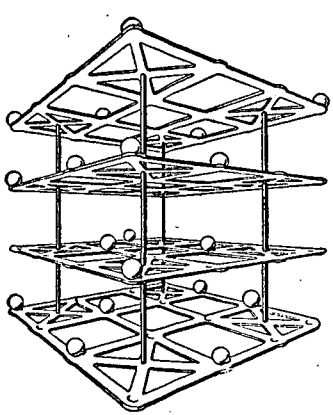

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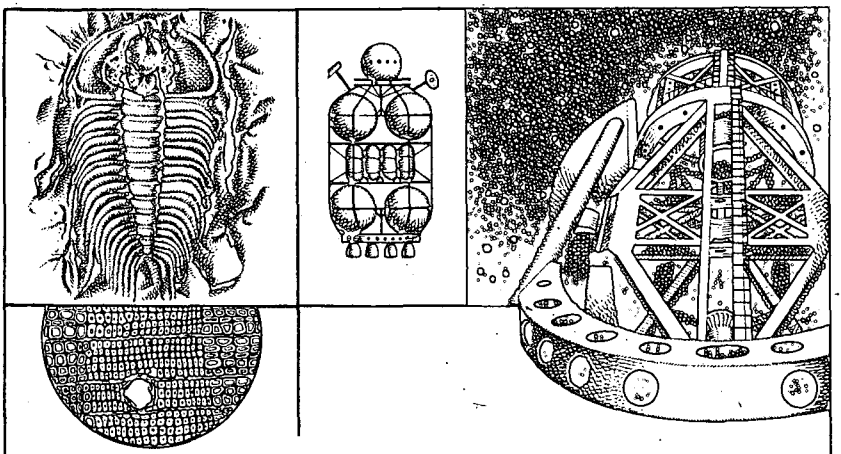

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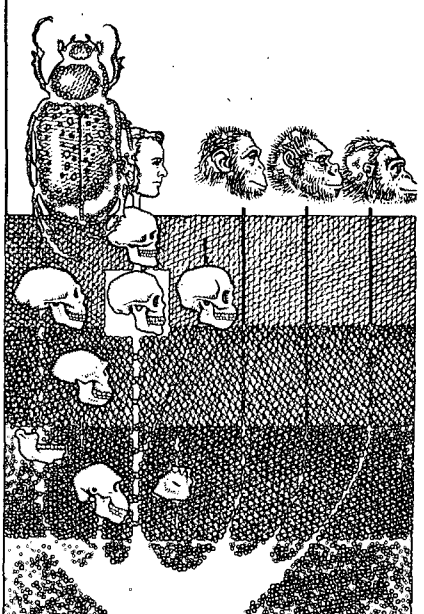

TRACKING DOWN THE "SEA SERPENT" PART I

WHILE rereading a book of reminiscences of the famous Austrian reporter Egon Erwin Kisch, I came across a little story which somehow seems applicable to the theme at hand. Talking about his days as a newspaperman in Prague, Kisch recalled an old editor whose main function in his later years seems to have con-

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sisted of belittling the news of the day.

If a local reporter came into the office with a story of a large fire somewhere, the old man would hardly glance at the report which he turned over to the composing room, but would tell the reporter about a much bigger fire that had taken place some forty years earlier when *he* was a young reporter. Egon Erwin Kisch remarked in his book that if a copy boy, white-faced, had come from the telegraph room with a wire stating that the Emperor (Franz Joseph of Austria-Hungary) had just died, the old editor probably would have replied: "Well, surely you did not expect such an old man to go on living forever."

You know how thoughts often connect the most improbable items that have occurred recently. A day or two earlier, I had received a letter from a reader in which I was asked whether I had any opinion about the tales of the "Sea Serpent." Presumably this letter had been inspired by my article on *Latimeria*, which was on the newsstands then.

But while reading Kisch's book, I remembered that letter and the thought occurred to me what the old editor might have said if the copy boy had brought in a wire announcing that the "Sea Serpent mystery" had, at long last, been solved, presumably by capturing one or by the discovery of a fresh carcass having been washed ashore.

He might either have said: "Well, surely you did not really expect that all the creatures in the oceans are already known to science." Or else he may have said: "Did you really think that this creature, which has been seen on many occasions for centuries, would remain undiscovered forever?"

BEFORE I go into the story itself, it might be useful to mention that one does not have to dig through old newspaper files to come up with stories about something called the "sea serpent" and then have to wonder whether this is a *bona fide* report of a sea captain who simply told what he saw, or whether the story was made up at the office because there happened to be no other news, what with Congress adjourned, the President on vacation and European statesmen sitting out the hot months of the year at the seashore or in their mountain cottages.

There are several books on the problem, one of which, at least, deserved to be called "professional literature." It was published in October, 1892, by a Dutch professor of Zoology, "Director of the Royal Zoological and Botanical Society at The Hague," A. C.

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Oudemans, Ph.D. It is an enormous book, nearly as large in size as the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and about as thick as one of its volumes, containing 592 pages in rather small type.

It contains reports on 187 sightings of the disputed monster. In all cases where the witnesses were still alive in 1892, Dr. Oudemans got in touch with them by mail to obtain the fullest possible documentation.

Not quite four decades later, in 1930, the second book devoted exclusively to the sea serpent saw print in London. The title of Dr. Oudemans' book had been simply *The Great Sea Serpent* (though written and printed in Holland, it was in English). The second book, by the late Lieutenant Commander Rupert T. Gould (R.N.), bore the title *The Case for the Sea Serpent*. Like Dr. Oudemans' work, Commander Gould's book was carefully documented, with cross-check by correspondence of all the stories where witnesses could still be reached.

It is amusing to see how the professions of these two authors influenced both the style and contents of their books. Oudemans' is primarily a zoological treatise, sometimes dull, with interesting (if somewhat far-fetched) zoological reasoning attached. Commander Gould's book is better written by far and you never have to wonder about such nautical detail as type of vessel, precise location, weather conditions, etc. But when it comes to zoology, he opened the door to some nonsense, presumably for the sake of completeness.

The same author later published another book called *The Loch Ness Monster* which is not as good a book, probably because it was rushed through typewriter and printing press. Professor Oudemans, then still alive, also wrote a few pamphlets on the Loch Ness monster, both in Dutch and in English. They don't much more than state that the Loch Ness monster, if captured, would vindicate his position taken in 1892.

Additional sea serpent literature can be found in a number of books devoted to the sea rather than to zoology. There is a round-up of the reports I thought most important in my book *The Lungfish, the Dodo and the Unicorn* (New York 1948, Viking), which at least has the advantage over the other two of being still in print.

THE so-called sea serpent mystery can be stated in a few sentences. If you eliminate all the sightings which fail to furnish a reasonably good description or where there is the least doubt about the veracity of the reporter, you end up with about half a hun-

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dred reports. They come from most of the seven seas, although the majority came from the Atlantic Ocean, which may simply be due to the fact that the Atlantic Ocean is more heavily traveled than any other.

There seems to be no special preference for any latitude. In the Atlantic, sightings range from Greenland and Iceland all the way south to nearly the southern tip of Africa. There are several along the coast of Norway, one from the English Channel, one from the Mediterranean. In the Pacific, there is one from the vicinity of Hawaii, one from the Gulf of California, several off the California coast and some off Alaska. There were one or two in the Indian Ocean. The only one from Antarctic waters I recall at the moment was most likely a mistaken explanation.

All these sightings could be explained by a specific shape, first drawn up by Professor Oudemans. This being the case, the easiest way out is to assume the existence of a large and officially unknown marine creature. If you do take this easy way out, you may speculate on what it is. Or what it could be.

Let's look at some of the most famous cases now. It is traditional, to some extent, to begin with Archbishop Olaus Magnus of Sweden. But I'll just mention his name, mostly because he was not an eyewitness himself, partly because he wrote his book far from home, in Rome, at an advanced age, so that mistakes and distortions are to be expected.

The oldest case to be quoted then will be that of Hans Egede, often called the "Apostle of Greenland," on one of his missionary voyages, when off the west coast of Greenland. I'll quote this verbatim:

> Anno 1734, July. On the 6th appeared a very terrible sea-monster which raised itself so high above the water that its head reached above our main-top. It had a long sharp snout, and blew like a whale, had broad, large flappers, and the body was, as it were, covered with hard skin, and it was very wrinkled and uneven on its skin; moreover on the lower part it was formed like a snake, and when it went under water again, it cast itself backwards and in so doing it raised its tail above the water, a whole ship-length from its body. That evening we had very bad weather.

THE last sentence sounds a little like a *non sequitur*. What it is probably intended to convey is that prior to evening and at the time of the encounter, the weather was not bad. The later printed version of Egede's journal is accompanied by the picture shown

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as Fig. 1, which you will find on the next page of this article.

It is said to have been made originally by a Mr. Bing, who was one of the missionaries aboard; but there is no way of finding out any more how much time went by between the encounter and the making of the drawing. And unfortunately it never occurred to Egede to state the dimensions of his ship anywhere. If we assume that it was a vessel of around 250 tons, which is likely for the period, the raising of the head "above the main top" would bring it to a height of around 30 feet above the water. It may be useful to add that Egede's book contains several rather good pictures of the various kinds of whales seen during the same voyage.

The next report was made only a few years later, in 1745, by Commandant Lorenz von Ferry, who traveled on a small vessel along the coast of Norway from Trondhjem to Molde. The weather was fine and the animal passed close to the vessel, swimming faster than the men could row. For this reason, the Commandant took his gun, which happened to be loaded with small shot, and fired at the animal which immediately disappeared in the water and did not come up again, although the Commandant made the boat wait around for a while in hopes of a reappearance.

Next came a flurry of reports from the New England coast, most of them in the form of solemn legal affidavits made and sworn to before the Honorable Lonson Nash, Justice of the Peace. The first witness — and, by a curious circumstance, also the last to have seen it — was shipmaster Solomon Allen, whose testimony began as follows:

I, Solomon Allen 3d, of Gloucester, in the County of Essex, Ship master, depose and say; that I have seen a strange marine animal, that I believe to be a serpent, in the harbor in said Gloucester.

I should judge him to be between eighty and ninety feet in length, and about the size of a half-barrel, apparently having joints from his head to his tail. I was about one hundred and fifty yards from him, when I judged him to be of the size of a half-barrel. His head formed something like the head of the rattle snake, but nearly as large as the head of a horse. When he moved on the surface of the water, his motion was slow, at times playing about in circles, and sometimes moving nearly straight forward. When he disappeared, he sunk apparently directly down, and would next appear at two hundred yards from where he disappeared, in two minutes. His color was a dark brown, and I did not discover any spots upon him.

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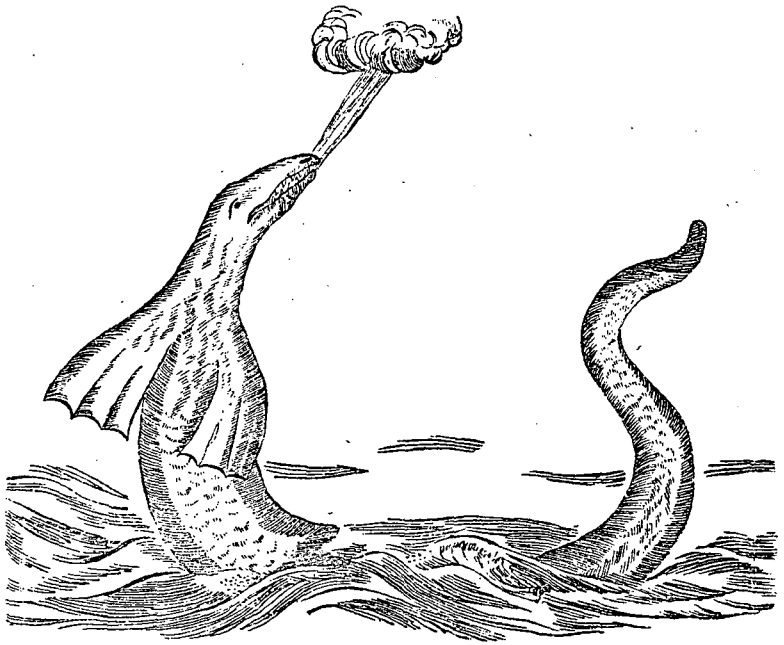

Fig. 1 Hans Egede's sea monster, as drawn by the missionary Bing

This ability of "sinking straight down" is one of the standard features of this series of reports as well as others. Lorenz von Ferry's animal also disappeared immediately under the water when hit.

The next important case, and one of the most famous ones to this day, is the so-called *Daedalus* sea serpent. On August 6, 1848, Her Majesty's ship *Daedalus*, commanded by Captain Peter M'Quhae, had reached a point in the South Atlantic, roughly halfway between the Cape of Good Hope and the island of St. Helena, returning from duty in the Indian Ocean.

In the afternoon of the date mentioned, *H.M.S. Daedalus* passed a "sea serpent." When the *Daedalus* arrived in London, word about the occurrence got out and was published in the *Times* and the captain was requested by the admiralty to state his position. He then wrote a letter to Admiral Sir W. H. Gage which I'll quote in full, for authenticity, interest and flavor:

SIR,—In reply to your letter of this

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day's date, requiring information as to the truth of a statement published in *The Times* newspaper, of a sea-serpent of extraordinary dimensions having been seen from Her Majesty's ship *Daedalus*, under my command, on her passage from the East Indies, I have the honour to acquaint you, for the information of my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, that at 5 o'clock p.m. on the 6th of August last, in latitude 24° 44′ S., and longitude 9° 22′ E., the weather dark and cloudy, wind fresh from the N.W., with a long ocean swell from the S.W., the ship on the port tack heading N.E. by N., something very unusual was seen by Mr. Sartoris, midshipman, rapidly approaching the ship from before the beam. The circumstance was immediately reported by him to the officer of the watch, Lieut. Edgar Drummond, with whom and Mr. William Barrett, the Master, I was at the time walking the quarter-deck. The ship's company were at supper.

On our attention being called to the object it was discovered to be an enormous serpent, with head and shoulders kept about four feet constantly above the surface of the sea, and as nearly as we could approximate by comparing it with the length of what our main-topsail yard should show in the water, there was at the very least 60 feet of the animal *á fleur d'eau*, no portion of which was, to our perception, used in propelling it through the water, either by vertical or horizontal undulation. It passed rapidly, but so close under our lee quarter, that had it been a man of my acquaintance I should have easily recognized his features with the naked eye; and it did not, either in approaching the ship or after it had passed our wake, deviate in the slightest degree from its course to the S.W., which it held on at the pace of from 12 to 15 miles per hour, apparently on some determined purpose.

The diameter of the serpent was about 15 or 16 inches behind the head, which was, without any doubt, that of a snake, and it was never, during the 20 minutes that it continued in sight of our glasses, once below the surface of the water; its colour a dark brown, with yellowish white about the throat. It had no fins, but something like a mane of a horse, or rather a bunch of seaweed, washed about its back. It was seen by the quartermaster, the boatswain's mate, and the man at the wheel, in addition to myself and officers above mentioned.

SEVERAL pictures were drawn by artists under the direct supervision of Captain M'Quhae (fig. 2 and 3). To this day, they look as convincing as they are inexplicable.

In the wake of the *Daedalus* story, several others were published, antedating it as far as the actual observation was concerned,

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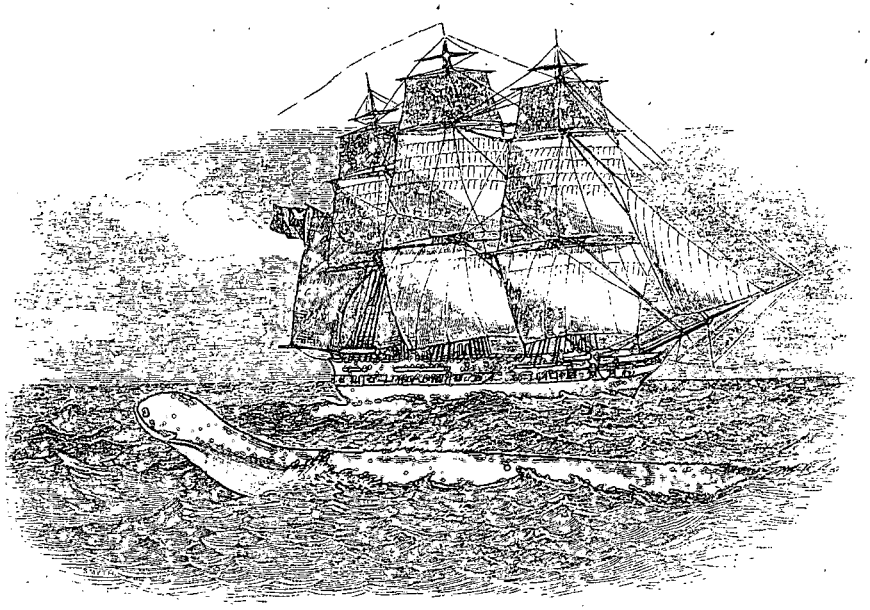

Fig. 2 The "sea serpent" passing *H.M.S. Daedalus*, as published in 1848

but not published until Captain McQuhae had stated: "This is what I saw, whether it can be explained or not."

One of these belated reports is the *Lady Combermere* sea serpent—in the vast majority of cases they are named after the ship from which they were seen—which had been encountered in 1820. This sighting had taken place in the northern Atlantic and when the vessel approached the animal, it "reared head and neck out of the water and after taking a survey it all at once vanished."

Another report was that of the *Royal Saxon*, made by Dr. R. Davidson. The *Royal Saxon* was going to India and was "a considerable distance south-west of the Cape of Good Hope." The water was "fine and smooth" and "it was in the middle of the day, and the other passengers were at lunch." But though there were few people on deck, the captain (Petrie by name) was among them. As for the animal:

It passed within 35 yards of the ship, without altering its course in the

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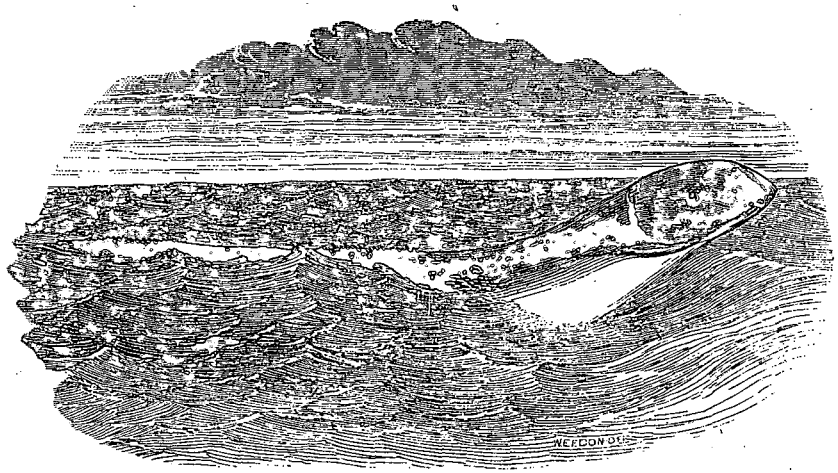

Fig. 3 The Daedalus serpent, drawn under supervision of Capt. M'Quhae

least; but as it came right abreast of us, it slowly turned its head towards us. Apparently only about one-third of the upper part of its body was above water in nearly its whole length, and we could see the water curling up on its breadth as it moved along, but by what means it moved we could not perceive.

Since Dr. Davidson wrote his report because of the *Daedalus* story, he was writing about twenty years after the event and did not remember the date any longer. He only knew that the *Royal Saxon* had sailed for India in 1829.

The next well-documented sighting took place only a few years later, a long distance away, on May 15, 1833, off Halifax, Nova Scotia. The observers were four commissioned officers of the Canadian forces and a Mr. Henry Ince who, though not holding a commission himself, was closely associated with the military, being the ordnance storekeeper at Halifax. They were all on a fishing excursion together. The statement signed by everybody con-

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tained the following paragraphs:

At the distance of from 150 to 200 yards on our starboard bow, we saw the head and neck of some denizen of the deep . . . in the act of swimming, the head so far elevated and thrown forward by the curve of the neck as to enable us to see the water under and beyond it. The creature rapidly passed, leaving a regular wake from the commencement of which, to fore part, which was out of water, we judged its length to be about 80 feet . . . There could be no mistake, no delusion . . . It is most difficult to give correctly the dimensions of any object in the water. The head of the creature we set down at about six feet in length, and that portion of the neck which we saw, at the same; the extreme length, as before stated, at between 80 and 100 feet. The neck in thickness equalled the bole of a moderate-sized tree. The head and neck of a dark brown or nearly black colour, streaked with white in irregular streaks. I do not recollect seeing any part of the body.

ANOTHER report published and presumably written in the wake of the *Daedalus* report was that of Captain George Hope, of *H.M.S. Fly*. Publication took place in the *Zoologist* (1849, p. 2356), but the observation had been made in 1838.

It was really an observation rather than an encounter: "In the gulf of California, the sea being perfectly calm and transparent, we saw at the bottom a large marine animal, with the head and general figure of the alligator, except that the neck was much longer and that instead of legs the creature had four large flappers, somewhat like those of turtles . . . the creature was distinctly visible, and all its movements could be observed with ease: it appeared to be pursuing its prey at the bottom of the sea."

During the three decades following the *Daedalus* incident, other reports came in, less spectacular than the *Daedalus* story, but most of them just as authentic. And then came somebody who could explain everything. His name was Henry Lee, his book was published in London in 1883, and the title he picked for it was *Sea Monsters Unmasked*.

Most of the time, Mr. Lee said, the sea serpent was merely a string of porpoises. Leaping through the water, the individual porpoises appear to be the separate convulsions of an enormous snake.

Now it is quite possible that one or another landlubber was taken in by such a string of porpoises. But most of the reports quoted speak of a "wake" left by the animal; they say that it reared its head far out of the water as if to look around. Or

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they say that the animal progressed through the water at a rapid rate, but that they were not able to see the means of locomotion. All of this is something porpoises cannot possibly do.

But Mr. Lee's main explanation was a creature which, only fifty years earlier, had been every bit as "fabulous" or "mythical" as the sea serpent itself. It was the *Kraken* of Norse folklore, the giant squid.

Actually, the giant squid had an even longer history than the sea serpent. A case of catching and subduing one had been reported by Pliny the Elder. In disguise, the giant squid appears in Homer's *Odyssey,* strangely enough (or interestingly enough) in the same place where Pliny's squid was killed.

While generally doubted to be real at the outset of the nineteenth century, the giant squid had been established as an actual creature during the decades preceding Lee's book. It is not too illogical that Lee may have felt that the establishment of the actual existence of a marine monster should explain all the sightings. So the *Daedalus* case was redrawn as a giant squid swimming at the surface with its long tentacles trailing (Fig. 4). And Hans Egede's sea monster could also be redrawn as a squid (Fig. 5).

It was all very ingenious, but unfortunately it did not fit. The position of the squid drawn to explain Egede is probably an impossibility. And the captain of the *Daedalus,* even though he probably never saw a giant squid traveling in this manner — nobody else ever has — would have given a different description if the animal was so close that he would have recognized a man at the same distance.

THEN came Professor Oudemans and his big book. After, as has been told, quoting and collecting everything ever written on the sea serpent, he sat back against the background of his zoological knowledge and tried to sum up.

The fact that the animal had so often been seen raising its head high out of the water indicated that it could as easily be a true serpent as a string of porpoises — meaning that it could be neither.

A serpent can raise its head when traveling, whether on land or when swimming at the surface of a lake or river. I have watched swimming snakes rather often — and I admit in passing that it usually happened because I threw them into the water to watch them swim — and from these personal observations, as well as the reported observations of others, I know that they raise at best ten

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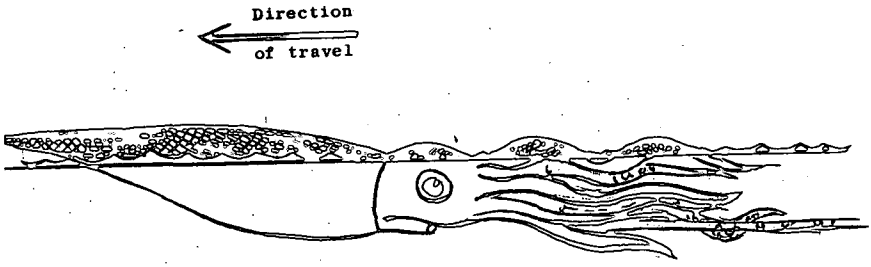

Fig. 4 The Daedalus serpent as "unmasked" by Henry Lee

per cent of their total length.

If the head of the snake is raised three inches above the water, the snake is in all probability 30 inches long, perhaps a little more. If the "sea serpent" raised its head 10 feet out of the water, that would make it 100 feet long, which is at least three times the length of the largest known land snake. Moreover, a swimming serpent, even one of colossal dimensions, would not leave a "regular wake."

Most important, since a snake's undulations are horizontal, no observer would ever be in doubt about the means of locomotion — they would be plainly visible.

And as a final clincher, paddles were seen in quite a number of cases, some of which have not been mentioned in this article for lack of space. A serpent with paddles is no longer a serpent.

Taking all this into account and also the fact that observations in rather cold water are frequent — the true sea snakes which have adapted themselves to a marine life live in the Indian Ocean and other decidedly warm bodies of water — Professor Oudemans proclaimed that it was his considered opinion that the sea serpent was actually a *mammal!*

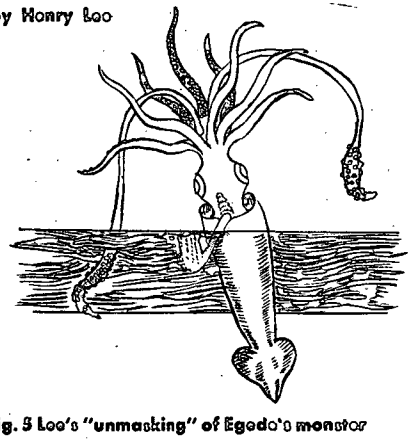

Fig. 5 Lee's "unmasking" of Egede's monster

I have to confess that, at this moment, I feel very much like the TV announcer who is told that he has 30 seconds left to introduce the "mystery guest." Since I've used up my space for this month, I'll finish the story in the next issue.

— WILLY LEY

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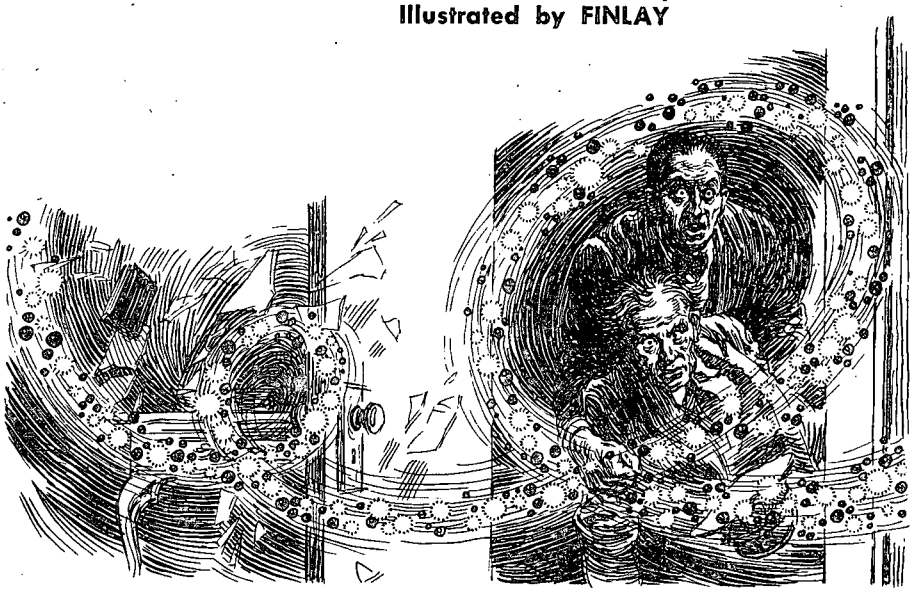
RATTLE OK

By HARRY WARNER, JR.

What better way to use a time machine than to handle department store complaints? But pleasing a customer should have its limits!

Illustrated by FINLAY



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THE Christmas party at the Boston branch of Hartshorne-Logan was threatening to become more legendary than usual this Christmas.

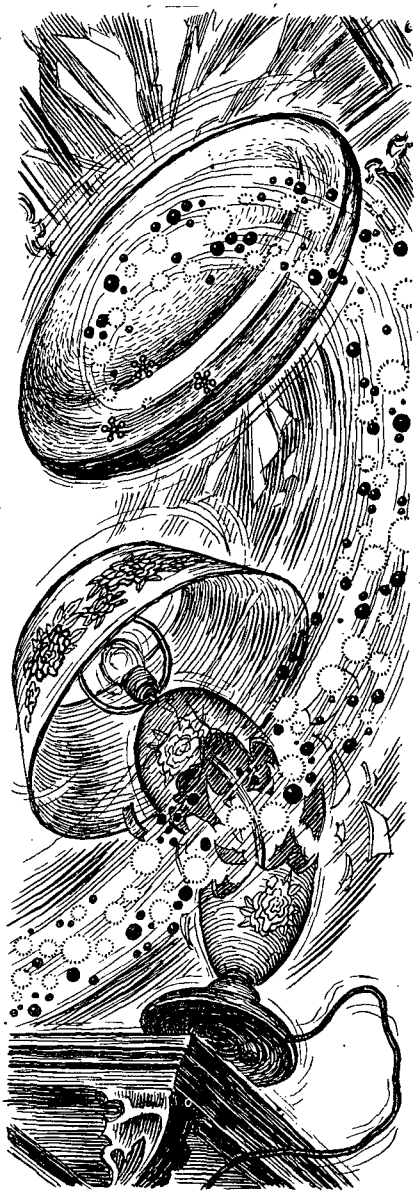
The farm machinery manager had already collapsed. When he slid under the table containing the drinks, Miss Pringle, who sold millinery, had screamed: "He'll drown!"

One out of every three dirty stories started by party attendees had remained unfinished, because each had reminded someone else of another story.

The recently developed liquors which affected the bloodstream three times faster had driven away twinges of conscience about untrimmed trees and midnight church services.

The star salesman for mankies and the gentleman who was in charge of the janitors were putting on a display of Burmese foot-wrestling in one corner of the general office. The janitor foreman weighed fifty pounds less than the Burma gentleman, who was the salesman's customary opponent. So the climax of one tactic did not simply overturn the foreman. He glided through the air, crashing with a very loud thump against the wall.

He wasn't hurt. But the impact knocked the hallowed portrait of H. H. Hartshorne, co-founder, from its nail. It tinkled impos-



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ingly as its glass splintered against the floor.

THE noise caused a temporary lull in the gaiety. Several employes even felt a passing suspicion that things might be getting out of hand.

"It's all in the spirit of good, clean fun!" cried Mr. Hawkins, the assistant general manager. Since he was the highest executive present, worries vanished. Everyone felt fine. There was a scurry to shove the broken glass out of sight and to turn more attention to another type of glasses.

Mr. Hawkins himself, acting by reflex, attempted to return the portrait to its place until new glass could be obtained. But the fall had sprung the frame at one corner and it wouldn't hang straight.

"We'd better put old H. H. away for safekeeping until after the holiday," he told a small, blonde salesclerk who was beneath his attention on any working day.

With the proper mixture of respect and bonhommie, he lifted the heavy picture out of its frame. A yellowed envelope slipped to the floor as the picture came free. Hawkins rolled the picture like a scroll and put it into a desk drawer, for later attention. Then he looked around for a drink that would make him feel even better.

A sorting clerk in the mail order department wasn't used to liquor. She picked up the envelope and looked around vaguely for the mail-opening machine.

"Hell, Milly, you aren't working!" someone shouted at her. "Have another!"

Milly snapped out of it. She giggled, suppressed a ladylike belch and returned to reality. Looking at the envelope, she said: "Oh, I see. They must have stuck it in to tighten the frame. Gee, it's old."

Mr. Hawkins had refreshed himself. He decided that he liked Milly's voice. To hear more of it, he said to her: "I'll bet that's been in there ever since the picture was framed. There's a company legend that that picture was put up the day this branch opened, eighty years ago."

"I didn't know the company ever used buff envelopes like this." Milly turned it over in her hands. The ancient glue crackled as she did so. The flap popped open and an old-fashioned order blank fell out.

Mr. Hawkins' eyes widened. He bent, reached painfully over his potbelly and picked up the order form.

"This thing has never been processed!" Raising his voice, he shouted jovially, "Hey, people! You're all fired! Here's an order that Hartshorne-Logan never

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filled! We can't have such carelessness. This poor woman has waited eighty years for her merchandise!"

MILLY was reading aloud the scrawled words on the order form:

"Best electric doorbell. Junior detective kit. Disposable sacks for vacuum cleaner. Dress for three-year-old girl." She turned to the assistant general manager, struck with an idea for the first time in her young life. "Let's fill this order right now!"

"The poor woman must be dead by now," he objected, secretly angry that he hadn't thought of such a fine party stunt himself. Then he brightened. "Unless—" he said it loud enough for the employes to scent a great proposal and the room grew quiet—"unless we broke the rules just once and used the time warp on a big mission!"

There was a silence. Finally, from an anonymous voice in one corner: "Would the warp work over eighty years? We were always told that it must be used only for complaints within three days."

"Then let's find out!" Mr. Hawkins downed the rest of his drink and pulled a batch of keys from his pocket. "Someone scoot down to the warehouse. Tell the watchman that it's on my authority. Hunt up the stuff that's on the order. Get the best of everything. Ignore the catalogue numbers—they've changed a hundred times in all these years."

Milly was still deciphering the form. Now she let out a little squeal of excitement.

"Look, Mr. Hawkins! The name on this order—it's my great-grandmother! Isn't that wonderful? I was just a little girl when she died. I can barely remember her as a real old woman. But I remember that my grandmother never bought anything from Hartshorne-Logan because of some trouble her mother had once with the firm. My mother didn't want me to come to work here because of that."

Mr. Hawkins put his arm around Milly in a way that he intended to look fatherly. It didn't. "Well, now. Since it's your relative, let's thrill the old girl. We wouldn't have vacuum sacks any more. So we'll substitute a manky!"

ANN HARTLEY was returning from mailing the letter when she found the large parcel on her doorstep. She put her hands on her hips and stared pugnaciously at the bundle.

"The minute I write a letter to complain about you, you turn up!" she told the parcel. She nudged her toe peevishly against

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the brown paper wrappings that were tied with a half-transparent twine she had never seen before.

The label was addressed in a wandering scrawl, a sharp contrast to the impersonal typing on the customary Hartshorne-Logan bundles. But the familiar RATTLE OK sticker was pasted onto the box, indicating to the delivery man that the contents would make a rattling sound and therefore hadn't been broken in shipment.

Ann sighed and picked up her bundle. With a last look at the lovely spring afternoon and the quiet suburban landscape, she went into the house.

Two-year-old Sally heard the box rattling. She waddled up on chubby legs and grabbed her mother's skirt. "Want!" she said decisively.

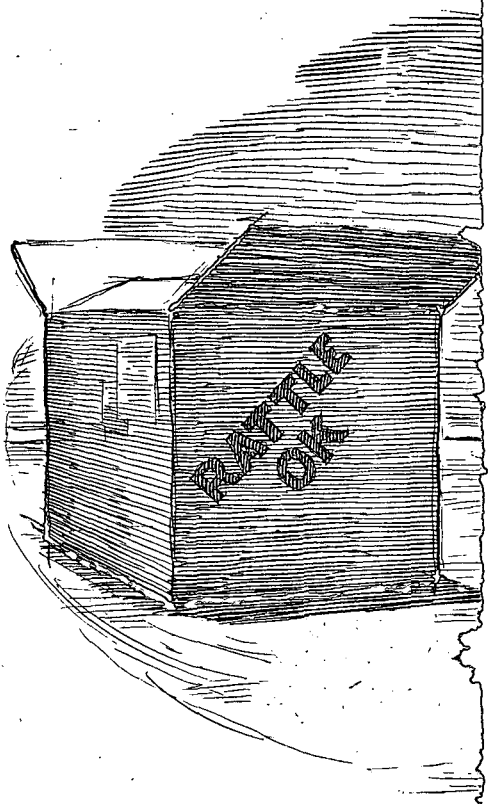
"Your dress ought to be here," Ann said. She found scissors in her sewing box, tossed a cushion onto the floor, sat on it, and began to open the parcel.

"Now I'll have to write another letter to explain that they should throw away my letter of complaint," she told her daughter. "And by the time they get my second letter, they'll have answered my first letter. Then they'll write again." Out of consideration for Sally, she omitted the expletives that she wanted to add.

The translucent cord was too tough for the scissors. Ann was about to hunt for a razor blade when Sally clutched at an intersection of the cord and yanked. The twine sprang away from the carton as if it were alive. The paper wrappings flapped open.

"There!" Sally said.

Ann repressed an irrational urge to slap her daughter. Instead,



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she tossed the wrappings aside and removed the lid from the carton. A slightly crushed thin cardboard box lay on top. Ann pulled out the dress and shook it into a freely hanging position. Then she groaned.

It was green and she had ordered blue. It didn't remotely resemble the dress she had admired from the Hartshorne-Logan catalogue illustration. Moreover, the shoulders were lumpier than any small girl's dress should be.

But Sally was delighted. "Mine!" she shrilled, grabbing for the dress.

"It's probably the wrong size, too," Ann said, pulling off Sally's dress to try it on. "Let's find as

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many things to complain about as we can."

THE dress fitted precisely, except for the absurd shoulder bumps. Sally was radiant for a moment. Then her small face sobered and she started to look vacantly at the distant wall.

"We'll have to send it back," Ann said, "and get the one we ordered."

She tried to take it off, but the child squawked violently. Ann grabbed her daughter's arms, held them above her head and pulled at the dress. It seemed to be stuck somewhere. When Ann released the child's arms to loosen the dress, Sally squirmed away. She took one step forward, then began to float three inches above the ground. She landed just before she collided with the far wall.

Sally looked scared until she saw her mother's face. Then she squealed in delight.

Ann's legs were rubber. She was shaking her head and wobbling uncertainly toward her daughter when the door opened behind her.

"It's me," her husband said. "Slow day at the office, so I came home early."

"Les! I'm going crazy or something. Sally just—"

Sally crouched to jump at her father. Before she could leap, he grabbed her up bodily and hugged her. Then he saw the box.

"Your order's here? Good. What's this thing?" He was looking at a small box he had pulled from the carton. Its lid contained a single word: MANKY. The box rattled when he shook it.

Les pulled off the lid and found inside a circular, shiny metal object. A triangular trio of jacks stuck out from one end.

"Is this the doorbell? I've never seen a plug like this. And there's no wire."

"I don't know," Ann said. "Les, listen. A minute ago, Sally—"

He peered into the box for an instruction sheet, uselessly. "They must have made a mistake. It looks like some kind of farm equipment."

He tossed the manky onto the hassock and delved into the carton again. Sally was still in his arms.

"That's the doorbell, I think," he said, looking at the next object. It had a lovely, tubular shape, a half-dozen connecting rods and a plug for a wall socket.

"That's funny," Ann mused, her mind distracted from Sally for a moment. "It looks terribly expensive. Maybe they sent door chimes instead of the doorbell."

The bottom of the carton contained the detective outfit that they had ordered for their son. Ann glanced at its glaringly lithographed cover and said: "Les,

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about Sally. Put her down a minute and watch what she does."

LES stared at his wife and put the child onto the rug. Sally began to walk, then rose and again floated, this time toward the hassock on which the manky lay.

His jaw dropped. "My God! Ann, what—"

Ann was staring, too, but not at her daughter. "Les! The hassock! It used to be brown!"

The hassock was a livid shade of green. A neon, demanding, screaming green that clashed horribly with the soft browns and reds in which Ann had furnished the room.

"That round thing must be leaking," Les said. "But did you see Sally when she—"

Ann's frazzled nerves carried a frantic order to her muscles. She jumped up, strode to the hassock and picked up the manky with two fingers. She tossed it to Les. Immediately, she regretted her action.

"Drop it!" she yelled. "Maybe it'll turn you green, too!"

Les kicked the hassock into the hall closet, tossed the manky in after it and shut the door firmly. As the door closed, he saw the entire interior of the dark closet brighten into a wet-lettuce green.

When he turned back to Ann, she was staring at her left hand. The wedding band that Les had put there a dozen years ago was a brilliant green, shedding its soft glow over the finger up to the first knuckle.

Ann felt the scream building up inside her. She opened her mouth to let it out, then put her hand in front of her mouth to keep it in, finally jerked the hand away to prevent the glowing ring from turning her front teeth green.

She collapsed into Les's arms, babbling incomprehensibly.

He said: "It's all right. There must be balloons or something in the shoulders of that dress. I'll tie a paperweight to Sally's dress and that'll hold her down until we undress her. Don't worry. And that green dye or whatever it is will wash off."

Ann immediately felt better. She put her hands behind her back, pulled off her ring and slipped it into her apron pocket. Les was sentimental about her removing it.

"I'll get dinner," she said, trying to keep her voice on an even keel. "Maybe you'd better start a letter to Hartshorne-Logan. Let's go into the kitchen, Sally."

Ann strode resolutely toward the rear of the house. She kept her eyes determinedly off the tinge of green that was showing through the apron pocket and didn't dare look back at her daughter's unsettling means of propulsion.

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A HALF-HOUR later, when the meal was almost ready, two things happened: Bob came home from school through the back door and a strange voice said from the front of the house, "Don't answer the front door."

Ann stared at her son. He stared back at her, the detective outfit under his arm.

She went into the front room. Her husband was standing with fists on hips, looking at the front door, chuckling. "Neatest trick I've seen in a long time. That voice you heard was the new doorbell. I put it up while you were in the kitchen. Did you hear what happened when old lady Burnett out there pushed the button?"

"Oh. Something like those name cards with something funny printed on them, like 'Another hour shot.' Well, if there's a little tape in there repeating that message, you'd better shut that part off. It might get boring after a while. And it might insult someone."

Ann went to the door and turned the knob. The door didn't open. The figure of Mrs. Burnett, half-visible through the heavy curtain, shifted impatiently on the porch.

Les yanked at the doorknob. It didn't yield for him, either. He looked up at the doorbell, which he had installed just above the upper part of the door frame.

"Queer," he said. "That isn't in contact with the door itself. I don't see how it can keep the door from opening."

Ann put her mouth close to the glass, shouting: "Won't you come to the back door, Mrs. Burnett? This one is stuck."

"I just wanted to borrow some sugar," the woman cried from the porch. "I realize that I'm a terrible bother." But she walked down the front steps and disappeared around the side of the house.

"Don't open the back door." The well-modulated voice from the small doorbell box threatened to penetrate every corner of the house. Ann looked doubtfully at her husband's lips. They weren't moving.

"If this is ventriloquism —" she began icily.

"I'll have to order another doorbell just like this one, for the office," Les said. "But you'd better let the old girl in. No use letting her get peeved."

The back door was already open, because it was a warm day. The screen door had no latch, held closed by a simple spring. Ann pushed it open when Mrs. Burnett waddled up the three back steps, and smiled at her neighbor.

"I'm so sorry you had to walk around the house. It's been a

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rather hectic day in an awful lot of ways."

SOMETHING seemed to impede Mrs. Burnett as she came to the threshold. She frowned and shoved her portly frame against something invisible. It apparently yielded abruptly, because she staggered forward into the kitchen, nearly falling. She stared grimly at Ann and looked suspiciously behind her.

"The children have some new toys," Ann improvised hastily. "Sally is so excited over a new dress that she's positively feverish. Let's see now—it was sugar that you want, wasn't it?"

"I already have it," Bob said, handing a filled cup to his mother. The boy turned back to the detective set which he had spread over the kitchen table.

"Excitement isn't good for me," Mrs. Burnett said testily. "I've had a lot of troubles in my life. I like peace and quiet."

"Your husband is better?"

"Worse. I'm sure I don't know why everything happens to me." Mrs. Burnett edged toward the hall, trying to peer into the front of the house. Ann stood squarely in front of the door leading to the hall. Defeated, Mrs. Burnett left. A muffled volley of handclapping, mixed with a few faint cheers, came from the doorbell-box when she crossed the threshold.

Ann went into the hall to order Les to disconnect the doorbell. She nearly collided with him, coming in the other direction.

"Where did this come from?" Les held a small object in the palm of his hand, keeping it away from his body. A few drops of something unpleasant were dripping from his fingers. The object looked remarkably like a human eyeball. It was human-size, complete with pupil, iris and rather bloodshot veins.

"Hey, that's mine," Bob said. "You know, this is a funny detective kit. That was in it. But there aren't instructions on how it works."

"Well, put it away," Ann told Bob sharply. "It's slimy."

Les laid the eyeball on the table and walked away. The eyeball rolled from the smooth, level table, bounced twice when it hit the floor, then rolled along, six inches behind him. He turned and kicked at it. The eyeball rolled nimbly out of the path of the kick.

"Les, I think we've made poor Mrs. Burnett angry," Ann said. "She's so upset over her poor husband's health and she thinks we're insulting her."

Les didn't hear her. He strode to the detective set, followed at a safe distance by the eyeball, and picked up the box.

"Hey, watch out!" Bob cried. A

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small flashlight fell from the box, landed on its side and its bulb flashed on, throwing a pencil of light across Les's hands.

BOB retrieved the flashlight and turned it off while Les glanced through an instruction booklet, frowning.

"This toy is too complicated for a ten-year-old boy," Les told his wife. "I don't know why you ordered such a thing." He tossed the booklet into the empty box.

"I'm going to return it, if you don't smudge it up," she replied. "Look at the marks you made on the instructions." The black fingermarks stood out clearly against the shiny, coated paper.

Les looked at his hands. "I didn't do it," he said, pressing his clean fingertips against the kitchen table.

Black fingerprints, a full set of them, stood out against the sparkling polished table's surface.

"I think the Detectolite did it," Bob said. "The instructions say you've got to be very careful with it, because its effects last for a long time."

Les began scrubbing his hands vigorously at the sink. Ann watched him silently, until she saw his fingerprints appear on the faucet, the soap and the towel. She began to yell at him for making such a mess, when Sally floated into the kitchen. The girl was wearing a nightgown.

"My God!" Ann forgot her tongue before the children. "She got out of that dress herself. Where did she get that nightgown?"

Ann fingered the garment. She didn't recognize it as a nightgown. But in cut and fold, it was suspiciously like the dress that had arrived in the parcel. Her heart sank.

She picked up the child, felt the hot forehead, and said: "Les, I think it's the same dress. It must change color or something when it's time for a nap. It seems impossible, but—" She shrugged mutely. "And I think Sally's running a temperature. I'm going to put her to bed."

She looked worriedly into the reddened eyes of the small girl, who whimpered on the way to the bedroom. Ann carried her up the stairs, keeping her balance with difficulty, as Sally threatened to pop upward out of her arms.

The whole family decided that bed might be a good idea, soon after dinner. When the lights went out, the house seemed to be nearly normal. Les put on a pair of gloves and threw a pillowcase over the eyeball. Bob rigged up trestles to warn visitors from the front porch. Ann put small wads of cotton into her ears, because she didn't like the rhythmic rattle, soft but persistent, that

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emerged from the hall closet where the manky sat. Sally was whining occasionally in her sleep.

WHEN daylight entered her room, Sally's nightgown had turned back into the new dress. But the little girl was too sick to get out of bed. She wasn't hungry, her nose was running, and she had a dry cough. Les called the doctor before going to work.

The only good thing about the morning for Ann was the fact that the manky had quieted down some time in the night. After she got Bob to school, she gingerly opened the closet door. The manky was now glowing a bright pink and seemed slightly larger. Deep violet lettering stood out on its side:

"Today is Wednesday. For obvious reasons, the manky will not operate today."

The mailman brought a letter from Hartshorne-Logan. Ann stared stupidly at the envelope, until she realized that this wasn't an impossibly quick answer to the letter she had written yesterday. It must have crossed in the mail her complaint about the non-arrival of the order. She tore open the envelope and read:

"We regret to inform you that your order cannot be filled until the balance you owe us has been reduced. From the attached form, you will readily ascertain that the payment of $87.56 will enable you to resume the purchasing of merchandise on credit. We shall fill your recent order as soon . . ."

Ann crumpled the letter and threw it into the imitation fireplace, knowing perfectly well that it would need to be retrieved for Les after work tonight. She had just decided to call Hartshorne-Logan's complaint department when the phone rang.

"I'm afraid I must ask you to come down to the school, Mrs. Morris," a voice said. "Your son is in trouble. He claims that it's connected with something that his parents gave him."

"My son?" Ann asked incredulously. "Bob?"

"Yes. It's a little gadget that looks like a water pistol. Your son insists that he didn't know it would make clothing transparent. He claims it was just accident that he tried it out when he was walking by the gym during calisthenics. We've had to call upon every family in the neighborhood for blankets. Bob has always been a good boy and we believe that we can expel him quietly without newspaper publicity involving his name, if you'll —"

"I'll be right down," Ann said. "I mean I won't be right down. I've got a sick baby here. Don't do anything till I telephone my husband. And I'm sorry for Bob. I mean I'm sorry for the girls, and

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for the boys, too. I'm sorry for — for everything. Good-by."

JUST as she hung up the telephone, the doorbell rang. It rang with a normal buzz, then began to play soft music. Ann opened the door without difficulty, to admit Dr. Schwartz.

"You aren't going to believe me, Doctor," Ann said while he took the child's temperature, "but we can't get that dress off Sally."

"Kids are stubborn sometimes." Dr. Schwartz whistled softly when he looked at the thermometer. "She's pretty sick. I want a blood count before I try to move her. Let me undress her."

Sally had been mumbling half-deliriously. She made no effort to resist as the doctor picked her up. But when he raised a fold of the dress and began to pull it back, she screamed.

The doctor dropped the dress and looked in perplexity at the point where it touched Sally's skin.

"It's apparently allergy to some new kind of material. But I don't understand why the dress won't come off. It's not stuck tight."

"Don't bother trying," Ann said miserably. "Just cut it off."

Dr. Schwartz pulled scissors from his bag and clipped at a sleeve. When he had cut it to the shoulder, he gently began to peel back the edges of the cloth. Sally writhed and kicked, then collapsed in a faint. The physician smoothed the folds hastily back into place.

He looked helpless as he said to Ann: "I don't know quite what to do. The flesh starts to hemorrhage when I pull at the cloth. She'd bleed to death if I yanked it off. But it's such an extreme allergy that it may kill her, if we leave it in contact with the skin."

The manky's rattle suddenly began rhythmically from the lower part of the house. Ann clutched the side of the chair, trying to keep herself under control. A siren wailed somewhere down the street, grew louder rapidly, suddenly going silent at the peak of its crescendo.

Dr. Schwartz glanced outside the window. "An ambulance. Looks as if they're stopping here."

"Oh, no," Ann breathed. "Something's happened to Les."

"It sure will," Les said grimly, walking into the bedroom. "I won't have a job if I can't get this stuff off my fingers. Big black fingerprints on everything I touch. I can't handle correspondence or shake hands with customers. How's the kid? What's the ambulance doing out front?"

"They're going to the next house down the street," the physician said. "Has there been sickness there?"

Les held up his hands, palms toward the doctor. "What's wrong

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with me? My fingers look all right. But they leave black marks on everything I touch."

The doctor looked closely at the fingertips. "Every human has natural oil on the skin. That's how detectives get results with their fingerprint powder. But I've never heard of nigrification, in this sense. Better not try to commit any crimes until you've seen a skin specialist."

ANN was peering through the window, curious about the ambulance despite her own troubles. She saw two attendants carry Mr. Burnett, motionless and white, on a stretcher from the house next door into the ambulance. A third member of the crew was struggling with a dishevelled Mrs. Burnett at the door. Shrieks that sounded like "Murder!" came sharply through the window.

"I know those bearers," Dr. Schwartz said. He yanked the window open. "Hey, Pete! What's wrong?"

The front man with the stretcher looked up. "I don't know. This guy's awful sick. I think his wife is nuts."

Mrs. Burnett had broken free. She dashed halfway down the sidewalk, gesticulating wildly to nobody in particular.

"It's murder!" she screamed. "Murder again! He's been poisoned! He's going to die! It means the electric chair!"

The orderly grabbed her again. This time he stuffed a handkerchief into her mouth to quiet her.

"Come back to this house as soon as you deliver him," Dr. Schwartz shouted to the men. "We've got a very sick child up here."

"I was afraid this would happen," Les said. "The poor woman already has lost three husbands. If this one is sick, it's no wonder she thinks that somebody is poisoning him."

Bob stuck his head around the bedroom door. His mother stared unbelievingly for a moment, then advanced on him threateningly. Something in his face restrained her, just as she was about to start shaking him.

"I got something important to tell you," Bob said rapidly, ready to duck. "I snuck out of the principal's office and came home. I got to tell you what I did."

"I heard all about what you did," Ann said, advancing again. "And you're not going to slip away from me."

"Give me a chance to explain something. Downstairs. So he won't hear," Bob ended in a whisper, nodding toward the doctor.

ANN looked doubtfully at Les, then followed Bob down the stairs. The doorbell was monoto-

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nously saying in a monotone: "Don't answer me, don't answer me, don't go to the door."

"Why did you do it?" Ann asked Bob, her anger suddenly slumping into weary sadness. "People will suspect you of being a sex maniac for the rest of your life. You can't possibly explain —"

"Don't bother about the girls' clothing," Bob said, "because it was only an accident. The really important thing is something else I did before I left the house."

Les, cursing softly, hurried past them on the way to answer the knocking. He ignored the doorbell's pleas.

"I forgot about it," Bob continued, "when that ray gun accidentally went off. Then when they put me in the principal's office, I had time to think, and I remembered. I put some white stuff from the detective kit into that sugar we lent Mrs. Burnett last night. I just wanted to see what would happen. I don't know exactly what effect —"

"He put stuff in the sugar?" A deep, booming voice came from the front of the house. Mother and son looked through the hall. A policeman stood on the threshold of the front door. "I heard that! The woman next door claims that her husband is poisoned. Young man, I'm going to put you under arrest."

The policeman stepped over the threshold. A blue flash darted from the doorbell box, striking him squarely on the chest. The policeman staggered back, sitting down abruptly on the porch. A scent of ozone drifted through the house.

"Close the door, close the door," the doorbell was chanting urgently.

"Where's that ambulance?" Dr. Schwartz yelled from the top of the steps. "The child's getting worse."

Something splintered in the hall closet door. The manky zoomed through the hole it had broken and began ricocheting wildly through the house like a crazed living creature, smashing ornaments, cracking the plaster.

Les rushed through the front door to try to pick up the policeman. The officer drew his gun. An unearthly scream of "Help!" shrieked out of the doorbell.

Ann put her hands over her eyes, as if that would make the unbelievable scene vanish.

THREE days after the Christmas party, in the middle of inventory, when her headache had completely vanished, Milly began to worry.

She talked the situation over for one whole afternoon with her best friend at Hartshorne-Logan, a girl in the complaint department. That same evening, after

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work, Milly went to the public library for the first time in her life. She borrowed a thick tome on the theory of time travel. But only three sentences in the first ten pages were comprehensible to her. She turned to her manky for comfort before going to bed.

The next morning, she braved the protective screen of secretaries, receptionists and sub-officials who ordinarily protected Mr. Hawkins from minor annoyances, and penetrated to his office.

Mr. Hawkins didn't recognize her when she walked in. His attitude became much more formal when she reminded him of their actions on Christmas Eve.

"So you see, Mr. Hawkins," Milly concluded earnestly, "I'm worried. We had so much fun at that party that we didn't think about what we might do to those folks in the past."

"You should understand," Mr. Hawkins firmly replied, "that I was not enjoying myself at the party. Definitely not. I must engage in the painful duty of assuming a pose of gaiety on special occasions, such as the annual office party."

Milly shot him a withering look, but didn't argue that particular point. She continued: "So I've been thinking. We might have done a terrible thing. Sending that dress to a kid without the right underclothing could be real dangerous. Maybe even fatal."

"We cannot harm people in the long ago, any more than the past could conceivably harm us."

"But don't you see?" Milly fought to restrain tears of fright and frustration. "I'm not *sure!* And it's the most important thing in the world to me. That little girl who got the dress is my grandmother. If she died while she was a little girl, there wouldn't be any me. I can't be born, if my grandmother died before she was three years old."

"The paradoxes of time travel have been greatly exaggerated," Mr. Hawkins said. "Perhaps a genealogist would be able to clear up the question."

MILLY rose to her full five-foot height, suddenly furious. "You don't care if I just vanish all of a sudden! All that you care about is keeping yourself out of a lot of bother!" She turned on her heel, walked to the door, and added: "After I've helped to fill forty orders every working day for the past three years!"

Milly stalked out and slammed the door behind her. Then she stopped, just outside the door, waiting for a chain reaction to occur. It did, about five seconds later.

Mr. Hawkins popped through the door with a shout: "Where's that girl?" He was through the

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reception room and halfway down the hall when Milly called him back.

"Here I am," she said sweetly.

He grabbed her arm and yanked her into his office.

"You know," he said, "I've been thinking about those poor, unfortunate people in the past, too. Now that you mention it, I believe we should do something for them." He wiped his forehead.

"You've been thinking about a poor, unfortunate manager right here in the present," Milly retorted, sure of her position now. "All of a sudden, you've figured out what it will mean if I vanish because my grandmother never had any children. You realize that if I've never existed, all of a sudden Hartshorne-Logan will have thousands of complaint letters, lawsuits about orders over the past three years. You're thinking about what's going to happen to your position, if you're to blame for all those customers not getting their merchandise."

Mr. Hawkins turned away until he got his face under control. "We'll talk about that later," he said mildly at last. "Let's agree that everyone will be happier if we straighten up matters. And don't you think that *just we two* should do the straightening up ourselves? It'll be simpler if — uh — other officials don't hear about this."

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WHEN Ann took her hands away from her eyes the mess was still more complicated. The new factor was a short young girl who was walking up to the house. She was looking about, like a country girl suddenly whisked to Times Square.

The policeman whirled when he heard footsteps behind him. "What do you want?"

"I'm afraid that I'm to blame for the whole thing," Milly told the officer. "I represent Hartshorne-Logan. We've just discovered that we made several mistakes when we filled an order for this family. I've come to pick up the wrong merchandise."

The doorbell made ominous clucking sounds as Milly reached the threshold.

She looked up at the box and told Ann: "I'm afraid that I can't get in while that defective doorbell is working. Will you cut off the house current for a minute, while I disconnect it?"

Les blinked at her, then began to curse, loudly and bitterly. "Why didn't I think of that?"

Les dodged the manky's careening and headed for the fuse box.

Milly called after him: "Maybe there are bananas in the refrigerator. Take them out right away, if there are. The manky will quiet down then."

Ann rushed to the kitchen, yanked out the three bananas and

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threw them through the open window. She heard the dull thud from the front room as the manky fell to the carpet and lay motionless.

"I've pulled the switch!" Les yelled.

The policeman warily stepped through the door, looking at Les. Dr. Schwartz intercepted the policeman.

"Officer," Dr. Schwartz said, "there's a very sick little girl upstairs. I think you'll do your duty best by trying to hurry up an ambulance."

"But there's a murder charge floating around and I practically heard a confession," the policeman protested, slightly dazed.

Milly had pulled down the doorbell assembly. She put it beside the manky, then scooped up the remaining sections of Bob's detective kit and put them on the pile. She headed for the stairs, calling over her shoulder: "Don't worry about your detective set troubles. Those things wear off in twenty-four hours."

STAGGERING slightly under the load of merchandise, Milly tiptoed into her grandmother's room. When she heard Dr. Schwartz trailing her curiously, she turned to him, whispering: "I'll watch over the little girl. You go down and explain to that policeman that there wasn't anything harmful in the chemicals in the detective set, and there was a short circuit in the doorbell, and that the child must be allergic to the dress. It was all Hartshorne-Logan's fault, not this family's."

"But what about that thing?" Dr. Schwartz said, pointing to the manky.

Milly tried frantically to think of a believable explanation and changed the subject: "The policeman said something about a murder confession. There was genuine truthtalk in the detective set. If someone swallowed any of it, it might be a genuine confession."

"My goodness!" Dr. Schwartz raced downstairs.

Milly bent over the child who would become her grandmother. Sally lay flushed and feverish on the big bed, sunk into a deep coma. Milly bent and kissed her grandmother, then quickly deactivated the anti-grav pads in the shoulders. After that, it took only a moment to decamouflage the zippers which held the crosh force. The dress then slipped right off.

Sally sighed the instant the dress fell free. Her skin was already returning to its normal hue by the time Milly had taken another dress from a bureau drawer. Milly slipped it onto Sally and covered her up to prevent a chill.

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Milly kissed the child again and looked at the ancestor whom she had known only as a tiny old lady. Then she gathered up her pile of merchandise, tossing on top the dress, with its shoulder pads again activated.

The commotion downstairs was still loud, but it no longer sounded hysterical. Milly ticked off the order list on her fingers, to make sure she had collected everything. Then she opened the bedroom window. Buoyed by the anti-grav force, she floated to the ground, landing with only a slight jar.

She darted through the backyard, away from the house, attracting no attention. Everyone in the block had convened at the front of the house, where Mrs. Burnett was screaming out a full confession and the policeman was sweatingly scribbling it down.

Mrs. Burnett was explaining in trying detail the exact manner in which she had poisoned her four husbands in the past seven years, to collect their insurance.

WHEN Milly returned to Hartshorne-Logan of the future, she sank wearily into a chair. She held her hand out and watched it quiver.

"Golly, I didn't realize how scared I was, until I got back," she told Mr. Hawkins. "But I think I did only one thing wrong. I forgot to figure out some alibi for my great-uncle to use for his accident with the clothes penetration ray."

"Your ancestors will forget all about that in their excitement over the insurance company rewards," Mr. Hawkins assured her. "I checked way back on the old records. I see that your great-grandmother paid her bill, right after the date when all this trouble came up. But she never bought another thing from Hartshorne-Logan."

"Well, it's a good thing that time travel can't cause trouble both ways," Milly reflected. "I don't think I'll even go to next year's Christmas party."

"No danger of time travel bothering us. Nothing could come from the past into the present that could possibly hurt us."

"Gee, I'm glad," Milly said, and sneezed. It frightened her because sneezes were unknown in this world from which the cold virus had been eradicated. Then she sneezed again.

A little later, Mr. Hawkins began to sneeze.

Three billion sniffling, coughing, nose-blowing persons throughout the world were soon proof that Mr. Hawkins had blundered again.

—HARRY WARNER, JR.

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YOU go

By E. C. TUBB

For pure, chilling horror, Herman discovered, nothing can beat cold, hard facts!

Illustrated by GAUGHAN

HERMAN came into the office beating his hands together and shivering with cold.

"Women!" he said. "Five gallons, a pint of oil and would I check the tires and battery." He snorted. "Tires I don't mind, but couldn't she have left the battery until daylight?"

"Service," said Onslow. "Service with a smile. Tip?"

"Not on your life." Herman held out his hands to the warmth of the stove. Together with Onslow, he formed the night staff of the Acme Garage. It was a pleasant enough job, with little to do in the small hours but sit in the office and wait for some stranded motorist to call for help or service the few cars traveling through the night. He nodded toward the paper Onslow was holding.

"Anything interesting?"

"Not much. A couple of hold-

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ups, a murder and some more disappearances." Onslow riffled the paper, his thin face adorned with heavy spectacles intent as he read the column. "You ever think about that?"

"Holdups?" Warmed, Herman sat down and lit a cigarette. Physically, he was totally opposite Onslow, being big and florid where the other man was thin and pale. He gestured with his cigarette. "Places like this don't get held up, not with the two of us. Those punks pick single-man stations to knock over."

"Not holdups," said Onslow. "Disappearances." He folded the paper and leaned forward. "Did you know that every year 12,000 people vanish? I don't mean they run away from their families or skip their jobs. They literally vanish." He snapped his fingers. "Just like that."

"Must have a reason," Herman said comfortably. He wasn't much of a reader and was tired of the radio, so an argument with Onslow was as good a way to pass the time as any he could think of. Made something interesting to tell Mary over breakfast, too.

"No reason," said Onslow. "No reason at all."

ONSLOW warmed to his subject. "You wouldn't think it possible in this civilization, what with social security, the police, the paper-work checking and registering every individual, but it does. Men and women vanish and are never found again. It's the truth."

"I don't doubt it," chuckled Herman. "There have been times when I've felt like taking a long, one-way walk. Means nothing."

"You don't get it," said Onslow. "I'm not talking about the people who have obviously decided to run away. People like that pack a bag, draw out their money from the bank, make some preparations before leaving. Most of them are easily found; all of them could be if anyone were interested enough. I'm talking about the mysteries, the people who vanish for no reason and without making any plans at all." He shook his head. "Sometimes it worries me."

"Maybe they were snapped up by something in a flying saucer?" Herman chuckled again; somehow, he couldn't take Onslow's statement seriously. He didn't disbelieve it, for the thin man never lied, but he just couldn't accept it. He changed the subject. "I've been thinking about what you told me last night. You know, that time-travel thing."

"The paradox?" Onslow smiled. "Did you work it out?"

"I think so." Herman frowned to stir up his memory; he and Mary had spent a couple of hours on the problem before he hit the

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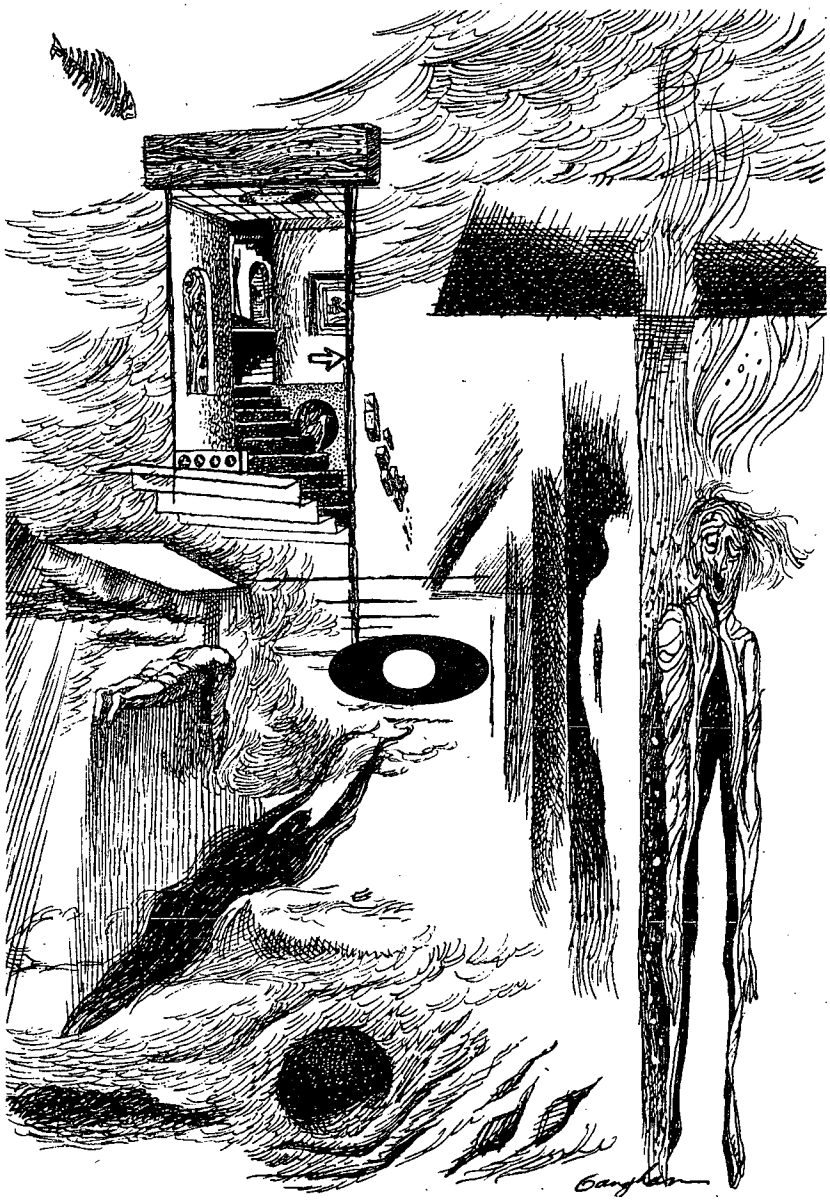

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sack. "If a man invents a time machine," he said carefully, "and then goes back to kill his grandfather when a boy, then he couldn't have been born, could he?"

"Hardly."

"Then if he hadn't been born, he couldn't invent a time machine in the first place. But if he hadn't invented it, he couldn't have killed his grandfather, so he would have been born anyway." Herman drew a deep breath. "So he didn't kill his grandfather at all. Right?" He looked anxiously at the other man.

"Near enough." Onslow knew better than to labor the point. "If he was born, then his grandfather couldn't have been killed when a boy, so all that about going back and killing the old man doesn't really enter into it."

"That's what I said," lied Herman. "Mary kept trying to tie me in knots, but I made her see sense in the end." He hesitated. "Got any more?"

"Paradoxes?" Onslow looked surprised. "Sure, if you're interested."

"I'm interested." Herman glanced through the office windows. The night was a bad one, cold, wet, miserable, a night most people would choose to stay indoors. "May as well talk as read or listen to the radio. More interesting, anyway."

"How about this one?" Onslow helped himself to a cigarette and hunched closer to the stove. "An old Greek named Zeno dreamed it up and it's a good one. Achilles was going to race a tortoise. The tortoise was placed halfway down a measured strip – it doesn't matter how long – and Achilles stood at the starting line. You got the idea?"

"Sure, the tortoise was given a big start."

"It was halfway down the strip," said Onslow. "So the gun went off and the race started. Now before Achilles could catch up with the tortoise, he had to cover half the distance between them. Right?"

HERMAN frowned, then nodded. "Sure, of course. He had to reach the halfway mark between them."

"Yes, but by the time he had reached that halfway mark, the tortoise had moved on a bit further. So Achilles had to cover half *that* distance, by which time the tortoise had moved on still more. So Achilles had to cover half *that* distance and then half the *next* distance and so on." Onslow leaned back. "How did Achilles ever catch up with the tortoise?"

"Uh?" Herman looked blank. "By running faster, of course. Nothing to it."

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"Isn't there?" Onslow reached for paper and pencil. "Look at it this way." He made swift sketches. "First he had to cover half the first distance, then half the second, then the third and all the rest. Look at it that way and he could never have caught up because, no matter how short the distance, he had always to cover a half of it, by which time the tortoise had moved on."

"I see," said Herman glumly. This was one time when he couldn't dazzle Mary with his superior knowledge. It wasn't much good taking home a problem to which he didn't know the answer.

Onslow took pity on him. "No one can really work it out the way it's stated. They say that calculus can do it, but I wouldn't know. The easy answer is that Achilles wasn't racing to catch up with the tortoise at all; he was running to a point past the finishing line. That way, all he had to do was cover a series of decreasing halves of distance and so, naturally, he won hands down."

"Sure," said Herman, relieved. "The gimmick depends on which way you look at it."

He glanced at his watch, then through the windows. A car came down the road, slowed and swung into the forecourt of the all-night restaurant a few hundred feet lower down. Onslow, who had headed toward the door when he heard the slowing car, grunted and busied himself at the stove instead.

Herman switched on the radio, listened to a disc jockey announcing the next record, then switched off with a grunt of disgust. "Got any more?"

"Paradoxes?" Onslow looked thoughtful. "Have you heard the one about the missing unit?"

"Tell me," Herman invited.

"Three men go into a restaurant," said Onslow. "The bill comes to thirty units and—"

"Units?"

"Dollars, pounds, francs, it doesn't matter what you call them."

ONSLOW lit a fresh cigarette. "The bill comes to thirty units—dollars, say. The manager, after the bill has been paid, finds that he's overcharged by five dollars. He gives the five dollars to a waiter who, being dishonest, gives each of the three men one dollar each and pockets the remaining two." Onslow flicked his cigarette. "Now, in effect, the men have each paid nine dollars for their meal. Three nines are twenty-seven. The waiter has kept two dollars. Twenty-seven and two make twenty-nine. Where is the other dollar?"

"Wait a minute!" Herman was frowning. His lips moved as he thought. "What's the answer?"

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"I don't know." Onslow sat down and leaned forward. "If you take the units — dollars — at each stage, you get the full amount. They handed the manager thirty dollars. He kept twenty-five and gave the waiter five, still thirty. The waiter gave the men one each, three, kept two, five, and the manager had the other twenty-five. Still thirty. But the men went into the restaurant with thirty dollars, ten each. They come out with one dollar each, so they must have spent twenty-seven between them. If they guessed the waiter was robbing them, all they could reclaim was two. So we still get twenty-nine instead of thirty."

He stood up as a car swished into the forecourt before the pumps. "You think about it while I serve this customer," he suggested.

The car was new and the customer felt toward it the same emotion that a mother has for her child. He insisted on Onslow's inspecting the oil, demanded a different brand from a sealed can, watched the pump gauge with a suspicious eye, asked to have his tires and battery checked and then wanted his plugs tested. By the time Onslow had finished, he was blue with cold and in a frame of mind to regret the passing of the horse as a means of locomotion. Herman glanced up from where he sat, a sheet of paper before him and a frown creasing his forehead.

"I don't get it," he said plaintively.

"Nor me." Onslow shivered as he warmed himself at the stove. "You'd think that a guy had better things to worry about than a heap of steel and rubber." He rubbed his hands together. "Plug testing at three A.M.! They'll be wanting a wash and polish next!"

"Service," said Herman maliciously. "Service with a smile. Tip?"

"Go to hell."

"It's warm there, from what they tell me," said Herman mildly. He scowled down at his sheet of paper. "I've been working on what you said. I still can't see it. If you count in the money the men have, then you get two dollars over; if not, one dollar less."

"Twenty-seven they paid, three they have, two the waiter has." Onslow nodded. "Thirty-two units instead of thirty. I told you it was a good one."

HERMAN blinked. He was annoyed at his inability to solve the problem, a little tired and more than a little irritated. "Why use units? Why not plain, ordinary dollars?"

"It would work in any currency," said Onslow mildly. "The paradox, I mean. Or with any-

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thing similar. People, for example."

"People!" Herman crumpled the sheet of paper. "You serious?"

For answer, Onslow picked up his newspaper and opened it at the column dealing with the latest disappearances. He tapped it.

"Why not? People are units just the same as the mythical dollars we were talking about. If you can lose a dollar by passing it from hand to hand, why not a man or a woman?"

"Hand to hand," said Herman shrewdly. "You don't pass people around that way."

"Maybe not, but they move just the same." Onslow listened to the hum of an approaching car. It mounted, reached a peak, fell away as the car drove into the night. "People are on the move all the time, driving, walking, on the subways, in trains, airplanes, boats, all the time moving from one place to another." He picked up the newspaper and glanced at it. "Just like the dollars in the paradox."

"You're crazy!" Herman snorted. "It isn't the same at all."

"No?" Onslow shrugged. "Call a dollar a unit and call a man a unit and you have the same thing. Pass them around, one way and another, and they are still the same thing. And if a dollar can get lost in the shuffle, then why not a man?"

"Men don't vanish like that," protested Herman. He flinched as Onslow held out the newspaper. "They can't."

"But they do." The thin man smiled and produced his cigarettes. He passed them to Herman, lit them, inhaled with quiet luxury. "I used to work in a lost and found office one time. You wouldn't believe the things people lose. Umbrellas, briefcases, parcels, books, all kinds of things."

"I've lost stuff myself," said Herman. "Anyone can forget a parcel or a book."

"Sure, but that isn't all." Onslow stared through the office window. "What about false teeth, artificial legs, artificial eyes, a pair of crutches, trusses, things like that? How can a man lose his false teeth? They aren't something you carry around in your hand or loose in a pocket. The same with artificial legs or eyes. And not wrapped, remember—we used to get them handed in just as they were found." He looked at Herman. "Have you ever seen a man walking around with an unwrapped artificial leg under his arm?"

"Not that I can remember."

"Of course you haven't. And teeth—you wear false teeth, Herman. What do you do with them?"

"Keep them in my mouth. What else?"

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"That's what I mean. And yet you'd be surprised at the number of dentures handed in to every lost and found office every week." Onslow shook his head. "It makes you wonder."

"Not me, it doesn't," said Herman. "I don't go for that sort of pipe-dream."

ONSLOW thoughtfully turned back to the window and blew smoke against his reflection. "Twelve thousand a year. And that's just in this country alone. No one knows how many people vanish all over the world. And people moving all the time. From one place to another and back again. From country to country, state to state, town to town, even from home to business. All moving just like the dollars in the paradox."

Herman didn't answer. He was thinking of Mary's younger brother, who had gone to Korea. He'd been reported missing—not killed, not even believed to have been killed, just missing. Herman hadn't thought it odd at the time, but now he couldn't get it out of his mind.

"Maybe they shed their 'bits' when they vanish," said Onslow reflectively. "A man gets lost in the shuffle and his teeth or spectacles or artificial leg just stays behind."

"But where do they go?" Herman was still thinking of Korea.

"Where does the missing dollar go?" Onslow shrugged. "No one knows where they go. Maybe they're still walking around somewhere, not knowing who they are. Or perhaps they just vanish, be as if they never were." He dropped his butt and trod on it. "And it could happen at any time. You might leave for work and never get there, or start for home or down the street and never arrive. You'd have made only one move too many or maybe just a move in the wrong direction. Who knows?"

"You're kidding," said Herman. "You made it all up just to pass the time, didn't you?" He was a big man and irritated.

Onslow stared at him, then picked up the newspaper. "Sure," he said. "I just made it up."

"Take a walk down the street and vanish!" Herman shook his head. "Crazy! But you made it all up, didn't you?"

"That's what I said." Onslow glanced at his watch. "It's getting near dawn. How about coffee?"

Going down the road to the restaurant was a privilege Herman insisted on. Someone had to stand by the phone and pumps, so they couldn't both go. Normally he was eager for the errand. This time, though, he didn't move.

"You go," he said.

—E. C. TUBB

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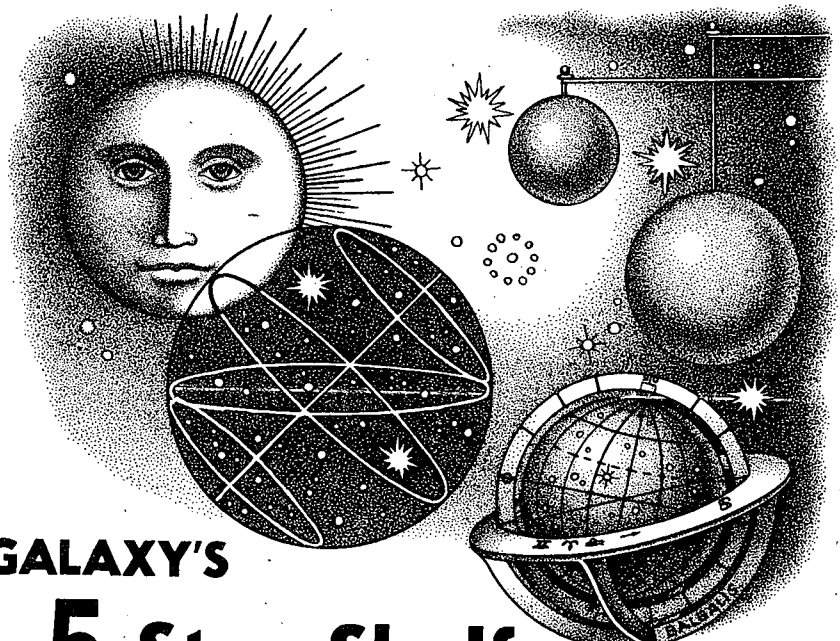

GALAXY'S 5 Star Shelf

THIS month's column, though devoid of a single fictional work, has, I think, considerable general appeal. Physical, natural and human sciences are all represented. It seems to me that today's releases, aimed at the lay market, are of high interest and digestibility. As for instance:

THE EXPLORATION OF MARS by Willy Ley and Wernher von Braun. The Viking Press, N. Y., $4.95

FOR the past four years, or since his articles on space flight first began appearing in *Colliers*, the "Mars Project" has been identified with von Braun, even appearing as a book under his name. Now he has pooled resources with our own Willy and produced an intellectually stimulating volume that has the reader asking: "Why isn't this being done *now?*"

These two gifted men show that a space station, the first necessary step to a Martian voyage, is a matter of a few billion dollars and little else. The authors have facts and figures covering every operation of the Odyssey, from the space flight itself to the actual

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landing on the planet and the return trip. The magnificent paintings by Chesley Bonestell complete a beautiful package.

THE MEN BEHIND THE SPACE ROCKETS by Heinz Gartmann. David McKay Co., Inc., N. Y. $3.95

GARTMANN, a well-known rocket expert himself, has compiled a series of short biographies of the men who he feels have been most instrumental in bringing rocketry to its present eminence.

He starts with Hermann Ganswindt, the fabulous eccentric who first applied Newton's Third Law of Motion to theoretical flight in airless space and ends with Wernher von Braun, the man responsible for the development of the V2 and who is now aiding the American research effort.

An interesting glimpse of the international set of visionaries who made reality out of the stuff of dreams.

THE COMPLETE BOOK OF SPACE TRAVEL by Albro Gaul. The World Publishing Co., Cleveland & N. Y., $4.95

I WILL not quarrel with Gaul's gall in naming his book. I can only admire him for opening thus: "The first space pilot has already been born. He is probably between ten and sixteen." My ten-year-old, Rickie, agrees vehemently. So, you see, Gaul has a ready-made market.

You and I can only stand on the sidelines while he cautions his neo-spacemen concerning the problems they are certain to encounter. The book's chapters are well thought out and have the advantage of having Virgil Finlay's unbelievably detailed drawings to enhance interest.

The completely straight-faced instructions for deportment upon encountering alien intelligence are priceless. Maybe it's *much* later than we think.

THEY KNEW TOO MUCH ABOUT FLYING SAUCERS by Gray Barker. University Books, N. Y. $3.50

SINISTER as the title is, my own hunch is that Gray Barker is due for a long life, his dangerous knowledge notwithstanding. His book is a weird winding trail of saucer reports which he tracked down to the neglect of his business, and the peculiar and sudden loss of interest in saucers by prominent investigators and devotees.

He may be right, but there is another explanation he omitted — downright boredom. I know *I'm* tired of saucers!

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THE COAST OF CORAL by Arthur C. Clarke. Harper & Brothers, N. Y., $5.00

SINCE the invention of the aqualung, there has been an upswing in interest in the sea. The trend is exemplified when such a man as Clarke, with his reputation earned in other fields, sticks his nose into a mask and swims off to investigate the underwater beauties of the Great Barrier Reef, off Australia.

Throughout the book, I couldn't help but feel that Clarke was purpling a lily. The subject is dramatic in itself and he appeared to be straining for vividness except during his underwater descriptions. But nobody can carp at the glorious photos, both black and white and color.

EARTH, SKY AND SEA, by Auguste Piccard. Oxford University Press, N. Y., $4.00

PROFESSOR PICCARD has always exemplified the spirit of scientific adventure to me since his daring balloon ascents in the '30s. Add to that the fabulous records set by his development, the bathyscaphe, employing the identical principles as the stratospheric balloon in the medium of the oceanic abyss, and you can see that I was panting to rip into this tome.

Interesting, yes, but it is too full of acknowledgments of aid from various agencies and manufacturing firms and has too much technical detail for the lay reader in search of adventure at the frontiers of science.

ELECTRONS, WAVES AND MESSAGES by John R. Pierce. Hanover House, N. Y., $5.00

PIERCE is no stranger to science fiction, having produced both stories and articles for this field. In this book, he attempts to fill the need for a somewhat more than elementary introduction to electronic theory and practice.

A. W. Keen in *Electronics* a couple of months ago did a similar job, but on a lower level. Pierce assumes his reader to have a minimum background of high-school math and leads him in easy stages through fields, waves, noise and radiation. Though this may not be light reading, it is an excellent try that succeeds in informing without intimidating.

STILL DIGGING by Sir Mortimer Wheeler. E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., N. Y., $4.00

IF YOU think archeologists can't have exciting lives, live this one and see! Of course, Sir Mortimer's life spans two world wars in which he served in the field,

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the second time as brigadier in Africa and Salerno.

Can you picture any wartime commander being as concerned with the preservation of antiquities as with the conduct of the war? Wheeler took time out from his command to set up a guard of liberated Italians to watch over Tripolitanian ruins.

Archeologically, Wheeler almost single-handedly brought excavating up to its present high level, in which practically nothing of value can be destroyed in the process.

A bit fruity in style, but thoroughly worth reading.

A SCIENTIFIC REPORT ON "THE SEARCH FOR BRIDEY MURPHY," Edited by Dr. Milton V. Kline. The Julian Press, N. Y., $3.50

AN unfortunate thing about published rebuttals is that they usually come too late, when interest has died down. This scholarly book, deserving of wide distribution, consists of several sections that deal with various questions raised by Bernstein in his book and lay the ghost of Bridey as effectively as the actual exposé which has just been circulated in the major magazines and newspapers at this writing.

SUCCESSFUL HYPNOTISM by J. Brandon. Stravon Publishers, N. Y., $4.00

AS WAS very much to be expected, the success of *Bridey* brought a flood of books on the subject. The above book, written by a well-known (and good-looking) woman stage hypnotist, in spite of its theatrical appearance and profusion of staged shots, is interesting, if light, in its treatment, and written with the respect becoming to one who earns her living from her knowledge of hypnotism.

PSYCHICAL RESEARCH by R. C. Johnson. Philosophical Library, N. Y., $2.75

DR. JOHNSON has assembled in this little volume a number of case histories and experiments in precognition, telepathy, object reading, etc., that read like working notes of any leading author of fantasy. These items are presented as completely substantiated.

Food for thought, but not to be swallowed whole.

— FLOYD C. GALE

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

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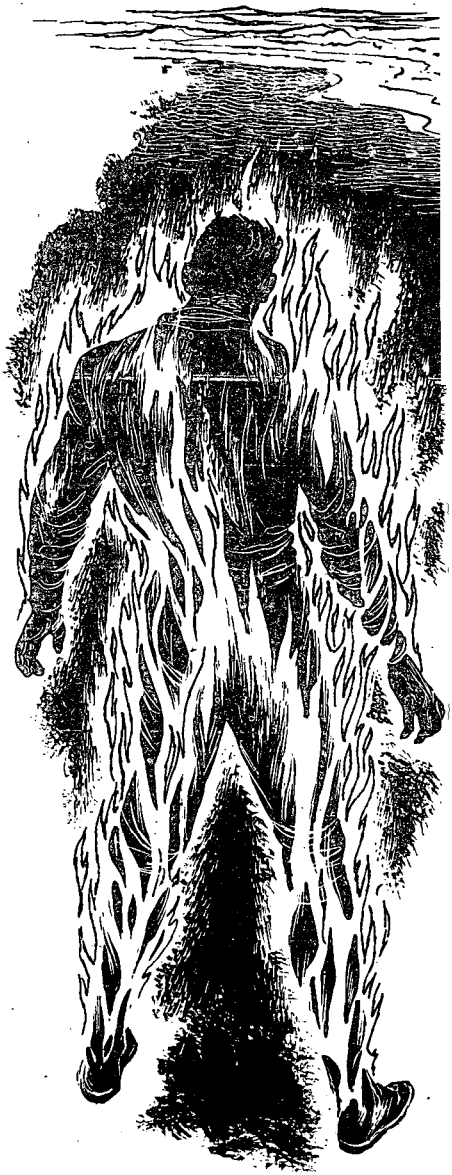
SYNOPSIS

IN THE freak "jaunte-age" 25th century of teleportation, Gully Foyle, a common spaceman marooned in space aboard the wrecked freighter SS Nomad, has been galvanized into ferocity by the unaccountable refusal of a sister ship, SS Vorga, to rescue him. Foyle succeeds in rescuing himself and returns from space devoured by a desire for vengeance against Vorga. He has returned hideously tattooed after a stay with a savage tribe who live on a Sargasso planetoid in the Asteroid Belt. They have salvaged the Nomad and built it into their little planet.

Foyle's first primitive attempt at vengeance forces him to blackmail and assault a lovely Negro girl named Robin Wednesbury, who is a jaunte teacher and a "telesend," a one-way telepath. Foyle is captured by the owner of Vorga and Nomad, the famous Presteign of Presteign, who is determined to discover the location of the wreck of the Nomad. On board the ship is Cr 20 millions in platinum and a mysterious substance called PyrE. Central Intelligence, represented by Captain Peter Y'ang-Yeovil, is also anxious to locate the priceless PyrE, which may be the vital factor in the war between the Inner Planets and the Outer Satellites.



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The Stars My Destination

Part 3 of a 4 Part Serial

By ALFRED BESTER

"Millions for nonsense, but not one cent for entropy!" was Foyle's scheme for revenge for being left to die in space!

Presteign employs Saul Dagenham, formidable chief of Dagenham Couriers, and Regis Sheffield, Terra's leading lawyer, to rip information out of Foyle. Foyle cannot be compelled to talk and he is immured in Gouffre Martel, a cavern prison, until he is willing to.

Kept in solitary confinement in

Illustrated by EMSH

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Gouffre Martel, Foyle is able to make contact with another prisoner, Jisbella McQueen, over the "Whisper Line," an acoustical freak which enables them to whisper to each other even though their cells are half a mile apart. Jiz McQueen, a rebel against jaunte-age morality which keeps women in purdah, is a clever, educated girl imprisoned for larceny. She educates Foyle, teaches him to speak properly, and plans to escape with him. Jiz explains to Foyle that if he is to revenge himself on Vorga, he cannot punish the ship itself; he must find the man who gave the order to leave him in space.

Foyle and Jiz make a daring escape from Gouffre Martel and Jiz takes Foyle to an underworld physician who removes the ghastly tattooing from Foyle's face. Then Foyle and Jiz jet out to the Sargasso Asteroid to salvage the Cr 20 millions from the wreck of the Nomad. Foyle makes the terrifying discovery that although the tattooing has been removed from his face, the blood-red scars of it reappear whenever he is overcome by any emotion. He will have to maintain iron control over himself forever.

Just as Foyle succeeds in cutting loose the purser's safe, containing the fortune in platinum and the PyrE, from the wreck of the Nomad, Saul Dagenham jets up to the asteroid. He has followed Foyle from Terra. Foyle, driven by his remorseless lust for vengeance, abandons Jiz McQueen to Dagenham, sacrificing her in order to escape with the treasure.

Months later, Foyle reappears on Terra in the guise of Geoffrey Fourmyle of Ceres, a ludicrous new-rich playboy whose antics are the delight and the laughing-stock of the world. This is really protective camouflage for Foyle, who is still intent on revenge. He has ferreted out the names of three crewmen from the Vorga. To track them down, he is prepared for any emergency, for he has studied hard and he has bribed a physician from the Commando Brigade to operate on him and rewire muscle and nerve to turn him into a fantastic accelerated fighting machine, capable of incredibly fast and strong acts for short periods.

Foyle's final step is to make Robin Wednesbury, the cultivated and lovely Negro "telesend," join forces with him. Foyle reveals to Robin that her mother and two sisters, missing since the war broke out between the Inner Planets and Outer Satellites, are in some way connected with SS Vorga which he is hunting. Although Robin was raped by Foyle and loathes him, she is forced to work with him.

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9

ON New Year's Eve, Geoffrey Fourmyle of Ceres made his onslaught on society. He appeared first in Canberra at the Government House ball, half an hour before midnight. This was a highly formal affair, bursting with color and pageantry, for it was the custom at formals for society to wear the evening dress that had been fashionable the year its clan was founded or its trademark patented.

Thus the Morses (Telephone and Telegraph) wore 19th-century frock coats and their women wore Victorian hoop-skirts. The Skodas (Powder & Guns) harked back to the late 18th century, wearing Regency tights and crinolines. The daring Peenemundes (Rockets & Reactors), dating from the 1920s, wore tuxedos and their women unashamedly revealed legs, arms and necks in antique Worth and Mainbocher gowns.

Fourmyle of Ceres appeared in evening clothes, very modern and very black, relieved only by a white sunburst on his shoulder, the trademark of the Ceres clan. With him was Robin Wednesbury in a glittering white gown, her slender waist tight in whalebone, the bustle of the gown accentuating her long straight back and graceful step.

The black and white contrast was so arresting that an orderly was sent to check the sunburst trademark in *The Almanack of Peerages and Patents.* He returned with the news that it was of the Ceres Mining Company, organized in 2250 for the exploitation of the mineral resources of Ceres, Pallas and Vesta. The resources had never manifested themselves and the House of Ceres had gone into eclipse but had never become extinct. Apparently it was now being revived.

"Fourmyle? The clown?"

"Yes. The Four Mile Circus. Everybody's talking about him."

"Is that the same man?"

"Couldn't be. He looks human."

Society moved toward Fourmyle, curious but wary.

"Here they come," Foyle muttered to Robin.

"Relax. They'll accept anything if it's amusing. Stay tuned."

"Are you that dreadful man with the circus, Fourmyle?"

"Sure you are. Smile."

"I am, madam. You may touch me."

"Why, you actually seem proud. Are you proud of your bad taste?"

"The problem today is to have any taste at all."

"The problem today is to have any taste at all. I think I'm lucky."

"Lucky but dreadfully indecent."

"Indecent but not dull."

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"And dreadful but delightful. Why aren't you cavorting now?"

"I'm under the influence, madam."

"Oh, dear. Are you drunk?"

"I'm under your influence."

"You wicked young man. Charles, come here and save Fourmyle. I'm ruining him."

"That's Victor of R.C.A. Victor."

"Fourmyle, is it? Delighted. What's that entourage of yours cost?"

"Tell him the truth."

"Forty thousand, Victor."

"Good Lord! A week?"

"A day."

"A DAY! What on Earth d'you want to spend all that money for?"

"The truth again!"

"For notoriety, Victor."

"Ha! Are you serious?"

"I told you he was wicked, Charles."

"Damned refreshing. Klaus! This impudent young man is spending forty thousand a day—for notoriety, if you please!"

"Skoda of Skoda."

"Good evening, Fourmyle. I am much interested in this revival of the name. You are, perhaps, a cadet descendant of the original founding board of Ceres, Inc.?"

"Give him the truth."

"No, Skoda. It's a title by purchase. I bought the company. I'm a mere climbing upstart, Skoda."

"Good. Toujours audace!"

"My word, Fourmyle! You're frank."

"Told you he was impudent. Very refreshing. There's a parcel of damned upstarts about, young man, but they don't admit it. Elizabeth, come and meet Fourmyle of Ceres."

"Fourmyle! I've been dying to meet you."

"Lady Elizabeth Citroen."

"Is it true you travel with a portable college?"

"The light touch here."

"A portable high school, Lady Elizabeth."

"But why, Fourmyle?"

"Oh, madam, it's so difficult to spend money these days. We have to find the silliest excuses. If only someone would invent a new extravagance."

"You ought to travel with a portable inventor, Fourmyle."

"I've got one. Haven't I, Robin? But he wastes his time on perpetual motion. What I need is a resident spendthrift. Would any of your clans care to lend me a younger son?"

"Would any of us care to? There's many a clan would pay for the privilege of unloading."

"Isn't perpetual motion spendthrift enough for you, Fourmyle?"

"No. It's a shocking waste of money. The whole point of extravagance is to act like a fool

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and feel like a fool, but enjoy it. Where's the joy in perpetual motion? Is there any extravagance in entropy? Millions for nonsense, but not one cent for entropy. My slogan."

THEY laughed and the crowd clustering around Fourmyle grew. They were delighted and amused. He was a new toy. Then it was midnight, and as the great clock tolled in the New Year, the gathering prepared to move with midnight around the world.

"Come with us to Java, Fourmyle. Regis Sheffield's giving a marvelous legal party. We're going to play 'Sober the Judge.'"

"Hong Kong, Fourmyle."

"Tokyo, Fourmyle. It's raining in Hong Kong. Come to Tokyo and bring your circus."

"Thank you, no. Shanghai for me. The Soviet Duomo. I promise an extravagant reward to the first one who discovers the deception of my costume. Meet you all in two hours. Ready, Robin?"

"Don't jaunte. Bad manners. Walk out. Slowly. Respects to the Governor . . . to the Commissioner . . . their ladies . . . bien. Don't forget to tip the attendants. Not him, idiot! That's the Lieutenant Governor. All right, you made a hit. You're accepted. Now what?"

"Now what we came to Canberra for."

"I thought we came for the ball."

"The ball and a man named Forrest."

"Who's that?"

"Ben Forrest, spaceman off the *Vorga*. I've got three leads to the man who gave the order to let me die—a cook in Rome named Poggi; a quack in Shanghai named Orel; and this man, Forrest. This is a combined operation . . . society and search. Understand?"

"I understand."

"We've got two hours to rip Forrest open. D'you know the coordinates of the Aussie Cannery company town?"

"I don't want any part of your *Vorga* revenge. I'm searching for my family."

"This is a combined operation—every way," he said with such detached savagery that she winced and at once jaunted. When Foyle arrived in his tent in the Four Mile Circus on Jervis Beach, she was already changing into travel clothes. Foyle looked at her. Although he forced her to live in his tent for security reasons, he had never touched her again. Robin caught his glance, stopped changing and waited.

He shook his head. "That's all finished."

"How interesting. You've given up rape?"

"Get dressed," he said, control-

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ling himself. "Tell them they've got two hours to get the camp up to Shanghai."

IT WAS twelve-thirty when Foyle and Robin arrived at the front office of the Aussie Cannery company town. They applied for identification tags and were greeted by the mayor himself.

"Happy New Year," the mayor caroled. "Happy! Happy! Happy! Visiting? A pleasure to drive you around. Permit me." He bundled them into a lush helicopter and took off. "Lots of visitors tonight. Ours is a friendly town. Friendliest company town in the world." The plane circled giant buildings. "That's our ice palace. Swimming baths on the left. Big dome is the ski-jump. Snow all year round. Tropical gardens under that glass roof. Palms, parrots, orchids, fruit. There's our market . . . theater . . . got our own broadcasting company, too. 3D-5S. Take a look at the football stadium. Two of our boys made All-American this year. Turner at Right Rockne and Otis at Left Thorpe."

"Do tell," Foyle murmured.

"Yessir, we've got everything. Everything. You don't have to jaunte around the world looking for fun. Aussie Cannery brings the world to you. Our town's a little universe. Happiest little universe in the world."

"Having absentee problems, I see."

The mayor refused to falter in his sales-pitch. "Look down at the streets. See those bikes? Motorcycles? Cars? We can afford more luxury transportation per capita than any other town on Earth. Look at those homes. Mansions. Our people are rich and happy. We keep 'em rich and happy."

"But do you keep them?"

"What d'you mean? Of course we —"

"You can tell us the truth. We're not job prospects. Do you keep them?"

"We can't keep 'em more than six months," the mayor groaned. "It's a hell of a headache. We give 'em everything, but we can't hold onto 'em. They get the wanderlust and jaunte. Absenteeism's cut our production by twelve per cent. We can't hold onto steady labor."

"Nobody can."

"There ought to be a law. Forrest, you said? Right here."

He landed them before a Swiss chalet set in an acre of gardens and took off, grumbling to himself. Foyle and Robin stepped before the door of the house, waiting for the monitor to pick them up and announce them. Instead, the door flashed red and a white skull and crossbones appeared on it. A canned voice spoke: "WARNING. THIS RESIDENCE IS MAN-

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TRAPPED BY THE LETHAL DEFENSE CORPORATION OF SWEDEN. R:77-23. YOU HAVE BEEN LEGALLY NOTIFIED."

"On New Year's Eve?" Foyle said to Robin. "Friendly fella. Let's try the back."

They walked around the chalet, pursued by the skull and crossbones flashing at intervals, and the canned warning. At one side, they saw the top of a cellar window brightly illuminated and heard the muffled chant of voices: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want."

"Cellar-Christians!" Foyle exclaimed.

HE AND Robin peered through the window. Thirty worshipers of assorted faiths were celebrating the New Year with a combined and highly illegal service. The 25th century had not yet abolished God, but it had abolished organized religion.

"No wonder the house is mantrapped," Foyle said. "Filthy practices like that. Look, they've got a priest and a rabbi, and that thing behind them is a crucifix."

"Did you ever stop to think what swearing is?" Robin asked quietly. "You say 'Jesus' and 'Jesus Christ.' Do you know what that is?"

"Just swearing, that's all. Like 'ouch' or 'damn.'"

"No, it's religion. You don't know it, but there are two thousand years of meaning behind words like that."

"This is no time for dirty talk," Foyle said impatiently. "Save it for later. Come on."

The rear of the chalet was a solid wall of glass, the picture window of a dimly lit, empty living room.

"Down on your face," Foyle ordered. "I'm going in."

Robin lay prone on the marble patio. Foyle triggered his body, accelerated into a lightning blur and smashed a hole in the glass wall. Far down on the sound spectrum, he heard dull concussions. They were shots. Quick projectiles laced toward him. Foyle dropped to the floor and tuned his ears, sweeping from low bass to supersonic until at last he picked up the hum of the Man-Trap control mechanism. He turned his head gently, pinpointed the location by binaural D/F, wove in through the stream of shots and demolished the mechanism. He decelerated.

"Come in, quick!"

Robin joined him in the living room, trembling. The Cellar-Christians were pouring up into the house somewhere, emitting the sounds of martyrs.

"Wait here," Foyle grunted. He accelerated, blurred through the house, located the Cellar-Christians in poses of frozen flight, and

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sorted through them. He returned to Robin and decelerated.

"None of them is Forrest," he reported. "Maybe he's upstairs. The back way, while they're going out the front. Come on!"

They raced up the back stairs. On the landing they paused to take bearings.

"Have to work fast," Foyle said. "Between the shots and the religion riot, the world and his wife'll be jaunting around asking questions—" He broke off. A low mewling sound came from a door at the head of the stairs. Foyle sniffed.

"Analogue!" he exclaimed. "Must be Forrest. How about that? Religion in the cellar and dope upstairs."

"What are you talking about?"

"I'll explain later. In here. I only hope he isn't on a gorilla kick."

FOYLE went through the door like a diesel tractor. They were in a large, bare room. A heavy rope was suspended from the ceiling. A naked man was entwined with the rope midway in the air. He squirmed and slithered up and down the rope, emitting a mewling sound and a musky odor.

"Python," Foyle said. "That's a break. Don't go near him. He'll mash your bones if he touches you."

Voices below began to call: "Forrest! What's all the shooting? Happy New Year, Forrest! Where in hell's the celebration?"

"Here they come," Foyle grunted. "Have to jaunte him out of here. Meet you back at the beach. Go!"

He whipped a knife out of his pocket, cut the rope, swung the squirming man onto his back and jaunted. Robin was on the empty Jervis beach a moment before him. Foyle arrived with the squirming man oozing over his neck and shoulders like a python, crushing him in a terrifying embrace. The red stigmata had burst out on Foyle's face.

"Sinbad," he said in a strangled voice. "Old Man of the Sea. Quick, girl! Right pockets. Three over. Two down. Sting-ampule. Let him have it anywh—" His voice was choked off.

Robin opened the pocket, found a packet of glass beads and took them out. Each bead had a beesting end. She thrust the sting of an ampule into the writhing man's neck. He collapsed. Foyle shook him off and arose from the sand.

"Christ!" He massaged his throat and took a deep breath. "Control," he said, resuming his air of detached calm. The scarlet tattooing faded from his face.

"What was all that horror?" Robin asked.

"Analogue. Psychiatric dope for psychotics. Illegal. A twitch has

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to release himself somehow, revert to the primitive. He identifies with a particular kind of animal — gorilla, grizzly, brood bull, wolf. Takes the dope and turns into the animal he admires. Forrest was queer for snakes, seems as if."

"How do you know all this?"

"Told you I've been preparing for *Vorga*. Show you something else I've learned, if you're not chicken-livered — how to bring a twitch out of Analogue."

Foyle opened another pocket in his battle coveralls and got to work on Forrest. Robin watched for a moment, then uttered a horrified cry, turned and walked to the edge of the water. She stood, staring blindly at the surf and the stars, until the mewling and the twisting ceased and Foyle called to her.

"You can come back now."

ROBIN returned to find a shattered creature seated upright on the beach gazing at Foyle with dull, sober eyes.

"You're Forrest?"

"Who the hell are you?"

"You're Ben Forrest, leading spaceman. Formerly aboard the Presteign *Vorga*."

Forrest cried out in terror.

"You were aboard the *Vorga* on September 16th, 2436."

The man sobbed and shook his head.

"On September sixteen, you passed a wreck out near the Asteroid Belt. Wreck of the *Nomad*, your sister ship. She signaled for help. *Vorga* passed her by. Left her to drift and die. Why did *Vorga* pass her by?"

Forrest began to scream hysterically.

"The records are all gone from the Bo'ness & Uig files. Someone got to them before me. Who was that? Who was aboard *Vorga?* Who shipped with you? I want officers and crew. Who was in command?"

"No!"

Foyle held a sheaf of banknotes before the hysterical man's face. "I'll pay for the information. Fifty thousand. Analogue for the rest of your life. Who gave the order to let me die, Forrest? Who?"

The man smote the banknotes from Foyle's hand, leaped up and ran down the beach. Foyle tackled him at the edge of the surf. Forrest fell headlong, his face in the water. Foyle held him there.

"Who commanded *Vorga*, Forrest? Who gave the order?"

"You're drowning him!" Robin cried.

"Water's easier than vacuum. I suffered for six months. Who gave the order, Forrest?"

The man bubbled and choked. Foyle lifted his head out of the water. "What are you? Loyal? Crazy? Scared? Your kind would

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sell out for five thousand. I'm offering fifty. Fifty thousand for information, you son of a bitch, or you die slow and hard."

The tattooing appeared on Foyle's face. He forced Forrest's head back into the water and held the struggling man.

Robin tried to pull him off. "You're murdering him!"

Foyle turned his terrifying face on Robin. "Get your hands off me! Who was aboard with you, Forrest? Who gave the order? Why?"

Forrest twisted his head out of the water. "Twelve of us on *Vorga*," he screamed. "Christ save me! There was me and Kemp—"

HE JERKED spasmodically and sagged. Foyle pulled his body out of the surf.

"Go on. You and who? Kemp? Who else? Talk."

There was no response. Foyle examined the body.

"Dead," he growled.

"Oh, my God! My God!"

"Just when he was opening up. What a stinking break." He took a deep breath and drew calm about him like an iron cloak. The tattooing disappeared from his face. He adjusted his watch for 120 degrees east longitude. "Almost midnight in Shanghai. Let's go. Maybe we'll have better luck with Sergei Orel, pharmacist's mate off the *Vorga*. Don't look so scared. This is only the beginning. Go, girl. Jaunte!"

Robin gasped. He saw that she was staring over his shoulder with an expression of incredulity. Foyle turned. A flaming figure loomed on the beach, a huge man with burning clothes and a monstrously tattooed face.

"Christ!" Foyle took a step toward the burning image, and abruptly it was gone. He turned to Robin, ashen and trembling. "Did you see that?"

"Yes."

"What was it?"

"You."

"Me? How's that possible? How—"

"It was you."

"But—" He faltered, the strength and furious possession drained out of him. "Illusion? Hallucination?"

"I don't know. I saw it, too."

"To see yourself . . . face to face. The clothes were on fire. Did you see that? What in the name of God was it?"

"It was Gully Foyle," Robin said, "burning in hell."

"All right," he burst out angrily. "It was me in hell, but I'm going through with it. If I burn in hell, *Vorga* will burn with me." He pounded his palms together, stinging himself back to strength and purpose. "I'm still going through with it, by God! Shanghai next. Jaunte!"

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10

AT the costume ball in Shanghai, Fourmyle of Ceres electrified society by appearing as Death in Dürer's "Death and the Maiden" with a dazzling blonde creature clad in transparent veils. A Victorian society which stifled its women in purdah, and which regarded the 1920 gowns of the Peenemunde clan as excessively daring, was shocked, despite the fact that Robin Wednesbury was chaperoning the pair. But when Fourmyle revealed that the female was a magnificent android, there was an instant reversal of opinion in his favor. Society was delighted with the deception. Nakedness, shameful in humans, was merely a sexless curiosity in androids.

At midnight, Fourmyle auctioned off the android to the gentlemen of the ball.

"The money to go to charity, Fourmyle?"

"Certainly not. You know my slogan: Not one cent for entropy. Do I hear a hundred credits for this expensive and lovely creature? She's all beauty and highly adaptable. Two hundred? Thank you. Three and a half? Thank you. I'm bid— Five? Eight? Thank you. Any more bids for this remarkable product of the resident genius of the Four Mile Circus? She walks. She talks. She adapts. She has been conditioned to respond to the highest bidder. Nine? Do I hear any more bids? Are you all done? All through? Sold to Lord Yale for nine hundred credits."

Tumultuous applause and appalled ciphering: "An android like that must have cost ninety thousand! How can he afford it?"

"Will you turn the money over to the android, Lord Yale? She will respond suitably. Until we meet again in Rome, ladies and gentlemen . . . the Borghese Palace at midnight. Happy New Year."

Fourmyle had already departed when Lord Yale discovered, to the delight of himself and the other bachelors, that a double deception had been perpetrated. The android was, in fact, a living, human creature, all beauty and highly adaptable. She responded magnificently to nine hundred credits. The trick was the smoking room story of the year. The stags waited eagerly to congratulate Fourmyle.

But Foyle and Robin Wednesbury were passing under a sign that read: DOUBLE YOUR JAUNTING OR DOUBLE YOUR MONEY BACK in seven languages, and entering the emporium of DR. SERGEI OREL, CELESTIAL ENLARGER OF CRANIAL CAPABILITIES.

The waiting room was decorated with lurid brain charts dem-

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onstrating how Dr. Orel poulticed, cupped, balsamed and electrolyzed the brain into double its capacity or double your money back. He also doubled your memory with antifebrile purgatives, magnified your morals with tonic roborants, and adjusted all anguished psyches with Orel's Epulotic Vulnerary.

The waiting room was empty. Foyle opened a door at a venture. He and Robin had a glimpse of a long hospital ward. Foyle grunted in disgust.

"A Snow Joint. Might have known he'd be running a dive for sick-heads, too."

THIS den catered to Disease Collectors, the most hopeless of neurotic addicts. They lay in their hospital beds, suffering mildly from illegally induced para-measles, para-flu, para-malaria, devotedly attended by nurses in starched white uniforms, and avidly enjoying their illegal illness and the attention it brought.

"Look at them," Foyle said contemptuously. "Disgusting. If there's anything filthier than a religion-junky, it's a disease-bird."

"Good evening," a voice said behind them.

Foyle shut the door and turned. Dr. Sergei Orel bowed, crisp and sterile in the classic white cap, gown and surgical mask of the medical clans, to which he belonged by fraudulent assertion only. He was short, swarthy and olive-eyed, recognizably Russian by his name alone. More than a century of jaunting had so mingled the many populations of the world that racial types were disappearing.

"Didn't expect to find you open for business on New Year's Eve," Foyle said.

"Our Russian New Year comes two weeks later," Dr. Orel answered. "Step this way, please." He pointed to a door and disappeared with a *pop*. The door revealed a long flight of stairs. As Foyle and Robin started up the stairs, Dr. Orel appeared above them. "This way, please. Oh . . . one moment." He disappeared and appeared again behind them. "You forgot to close the door." He shut the door and jaunted again. This time he reappeared high at the head of the stairs. "In here, please."

"Showing off," Foyle muttered. "Double your jaunting or double your money back. All the same, he's pretty fast. I'll have to be faster."

They entered the consultation room. It was a glass-roofed penthouse. The walls were lined with gaudy antiquated medical apparatus: a sedative bath-machine, an electric chair for administering shock treatment to schizophrenics,

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an EEG analyzer for tracing psychotic patterns, old optical and electronic microscopes.

The quack waited for them behind his desk. He jaunted to the door, closed it, jaunted back to his desk, bowed, indicated chairs, jaunted behind Robin's and held it for her, jaunted to the window and adjusted the shade, jaunted to the light switch and adjusted the lights, then reappeared behind his desk.

"One year ago," he smiled, "I could not jaunte at all. Then I discovered the secret, the Salutiferous Abstersive which—"

Foyle touched his tongue to the switchboard wired into the nerve-endings of his teeth. He accelerated. He arose without haste, stepped to the slow-motion figure going "Bloo-hwoo-fwaa-maw" behind the desk, took out a heavy sap and scientifically smote Orel across the brow, concussing the frontal lobes and stunning the jaunte center. He picked the quack up and strapped him into the electric chair. All this took approximately two seconds. To Robin Wednesbury, it was a blur of motion.

FOYLE decelerated. The quack opened his eyes, stirred, discovered where he was, and started in anger and perplexity.

"You're Sergei Orel, pharmacist's mate off the *Vorga*," Foyle said quietly. "You were aboard the *Vorga* on September 16, 2436."

The anger and perplexity turned to terror.

"On September sixteen, you passed a wreck out near the Asteroid Belt. It was the wreck of the *Nomad*. She signaled for help and *Vorga* passed her by. You left her to drift and die. Why?"

Orel rolled his eyes but did not answer.

"Who gave the order to pass me by? Who was willing to let me rot and die?"

Orel began to gibber.

"Who was aboard *Vorga?* Who shipped with you? Who was in command? I'm going to get an answer. I'll buy it or tear it out of you. Why was I left to die? Who told you to let me die?"

Orel screamed. "I can't talk abou— Wait! I'll tell—"

He sagged.

Foyle examined the body. "Dead, just when he was ready to talk, like Forrest."

"Murdered."

"I never touched him. It was suicide." Foyle guffawed without humor.

"You're insane."

"No, amused. I didn't kill them; I forced them to kill themselves."

"What nonsense is this?"

"They've been given Sympathetic Blocks. You know about SBs, girl? Intelligence uses them on espionage agents. Take a cer-

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tain body of information you don't want told. Link it with the sympathetic nervous system that controls automatic respiration and heart beat. As soon as the subject tries to reveal that information, the block comes down, the heart and lungs stop, the man dies, your secret's kept. An agent doesn't have to worry about killing himself to avoid torture; it's been done for him."

"It was done to these men?" she asked.

"Obviously."

"But why?"

"How do I know? Refugee Running isn't the answer. *Vorga* must have been operating worse rackets than that to take this precaution. But we've got a problem. Our last lead is Poggi in Rome. Angelo Poggi, chef's assistant off the *Vorga*. How are we going to get information out of him without—"

He broke off.

His image stood before him, silent, ominous, face burning blood-red, clothes flaming.

Foyle was paralyzed. He took a breath and spoke in a shaking voice. "Who are you? What do you—"

The image disappeared without a sound.

Foyle turned to Robin, moistening his lips. "Did you see it?" Her expression answered him. "Was it real?"

SHE pointed to Sergei Orel's desk, alongside which the image had stood. Papers on the desk had caught fire and were burning briskly. Foyle backed away, still frightened and bewildered. He passed a hand across his face. It came away wet.

Robin rushed to the desk and tried to beat out the flames. She picked up wads of paper and letters and slammed helplessly. Foyle did not move.

"I can't stop it," she gasped at last. "We've got to get out of here."

Foyle nodded, then pulled himself together. "Rome," he croaked. "We jaunte to Rome. There's got to be some explanation for this. I'll find it, by God! And in the meantime, I'm not quitting. Rome. Go, girl. Jaunte!"

* * *

Since the Middle Ages, the Spanish Stairs have been the center of corruption in Rome. Rising from the Piazza di Spagna to the gardens of the Villa Borghese in a broad long sweep, the Spanish Stairs are, have been, and always will be swarming with vice.

They were destroyed in the fission wars of the late 20th century. They were rebuilt and destroyed again in the war of the World Restoration in the 21st century. Once more they were rebuilt and this time covered over with blastproof crystal, turning

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the stairs into a stepped Galleria. The dome of the Galleria cut off the view from the death chamber in Keats' house. No longer would visitors peep through the narrow window and see the last sight that met the dying poet's eyes. Now they saw the smoky dome of the Spanish Stairs, and through it the distorted figures of corruption below.

The Galleria of the Stairs was illuminated at night, and this New Year's Eve was chaotic. For centuries, Rome has welcomed the New Year with a bombardment — firecrackers, rockets, torpedoes, gunshots, bottles, shoes, old pots and pans. Romans save junk for months to be hurled out of top floor windows when midnight strikes.

The roar of fireworks inside the Stairs and the clatter of debris clashing on the Galleria roof were deafening as Foyle and Robin Wednesbury climbed down from the carnival in the Borghese Palace.

THEY were still in costume — Foyle in the livid crimson-and-black tights and doublet of Cesare Borgia, Robin in the silver-encrusted gown of Lucrezia Borgia. They wore grotesque velvet masks. The contrast between their Renaissance costume and the modern clothes around them brought forth jeers and catcalls. Even the Lobos who frequented the Spanish Stairs, the unfortunate habitual criminals who had had a quarter of their brains burned out by prefrontal lobotomy, were aroused from their frightful apathy to stare. The mob seethed around the couple as they descended the Galleria.

"Poggi," Foyle called quietly. "Angelo Poggi?"

A bawd bellowed anatomical adjurations at him.

"Poggi? Angelo Poggi?" Foyle was impassive. "I'm told he can be found on the Stairs at night. Angelo Poggi?"

A whore maligned his mother.

"Angelo Poggi? Ten credits to anyone who brings me to him."

Foyle was ringed with extended hands, some filthy, some scented, all greedy. He shook his head. "Show me first."

Roman rage crackled around him.

"Poggi? Angelo Poggi?"

* * *

After six weeks of loitering on the Spanish Stairs, Captain Peter Y'ang-Yeovil at last heard the words he had hoped to hear. Six weeks of tedious assumption of the identity of Angelo Poggi, chef's assistant off the *Vorga*, long dead, was finally paying off.

It had been a gamble, first risked when Intelligence had brought the news to Captain Y'ang-Yeovil that someone was making cau-

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tious inquiries about the crew of the Presteign *Vorga*, and paying heavily for information.

"It's a long-shot," Y'ang-Yeovil had said, "but Gully Foyle *did* make that lunatic attempt to blow up *Vorga*. And twenty pounds of PyrE is worth a long-shot."

Now he waddled up the stairs toward the man in the Renaissance costume and mask. He had put on forty pounds with glandular shots. He had darkened his complexion with diet manipulation. His features, never of an Oriental cast but cut more along the hawklike lines of the ancient American Indian, easily fell into an unreliable pattern with a little muscular control.

The Intelligence man panted up the Spanish Stairs, a gross cook with a larcenous countenance. He extended a package of soiled envelopes toward Foyle.

"Filthy pictures, signore? Cellar-Christians, kneeling, praying, singing psalms, kissing cross? Very naughty."

"No." Foyle brushed the pornography aside. "I'm looking for Angelo Poggi."

Y'ANG-YEOVIL signaled microscopically. His crew on the stairs began photographing and recording the interview without ceasing its pimping and whoring. The Secret Speech of the Intelligence Tong of the Inner Planets Armed Forces wigwagged around Foyle and Robin in the ancient Chinese sign-language of eyelids, eyebrows, fingertips and infinitesimal body motions.

"Signore?" Y'ang-Yeovil wheezed.

"Angelo Poggi?"

"Si, signore," Y'ang-Yeovil replied. "I am Poggi."

"Chef's assistant off the *Vorga?*" Expecting the same start of terror manifested by Forrest and Orel, which he at last understood, Foyle shot out a hand and grabbed Y'ang-Yeovil's elbow. "Yes?"

"Si, signore," Y'ong-Yeovil replied tranquilly. "How can I serve your worship?"

"Maybe this one can come through," Foyle murmured to Robin. "He's not scared. Maybe he knows a way around the Block. I want information from you, Poggi."

"Of what nature, signore, and at what price?"

"Anything you've got. Name your price."

"But, signore! I am a man full of years and experience. I am not to be bought in wholesale lots. I must be paid item by item. Make your selection and I will name the price. What do you want?"

"You were aboard *Vorga* on September 16th, 2436?"

"That item costs Cr 10."

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Foyle smiled mirthlessly and paid.

"I was, signore."

"I want to know about a ship you passed out near the Asteroid Belt. The wreck of the *Nomad*. You passed her on September sixteen. *Nomad* signaled for help and *Vorga* passed her by. Who gave that order?"

"Ah, signore!"

"Who gave you that order and why?"

"I must know why a question is asked before I answer, signore." Y'ang-Yeovil smiled greasily. "And I will pay for my caution by cutting the price. Why are you interested in *Vorga* and *Nomad* and this shocking abandonment in space? Were you, perhaps, the unfortunate who was so cruelly treated?"

"He's not Italian! His accent's perfect, but the speech pattern's all wrong. No Italian would frame sentences like that."

Foyle stiffened in alarm. Y'ang-Yeovil's eyes, sharpened to detect and deduce from minutiae, caught the change in attitude. He realized at once that he had slipped somehow.

He signaled to his crew urgently.

A WHITE-HOT brawl broke out on the Spanish Stairs. In an instant, Foyle and Robin were caught up in a screaming, struggling mob. The crews of the Intelligence Tong were past-masters of this OP-I maneuver, designed to outwit a jaunting world. Their split-second timing could knock any man off balance and strip him for identification. Their success was based on the simple fact that between unexpected assault and defensive response, there must always be a recognition lag. Within the space of that lag, the Intelligence Tong guaranteed to prevent any man from saving himself.

In three-fifths of a second Foyle was battered, kneed, hammered across the forehead, dropped to the steps and spread-eagled. The mask was plucked from his face, portions of his clothes torn away, and he was helpless for the identification cameras. Then, for the first time in the history of the tong, their schedule was interrupted.

A man appeared, straddling Foyle's body — a huge man with a hideously tattooed face and clothes that smoked and flamed. The apparition was so appalling that the crew stopped dead and stared. A howl went up from the crowd on the Stairs.

"The Burning Man!"

"But *that's* Foyle," Y'ang-Yeovil whispered.

For perhaps a quarter of a minute, the apparition stood, silent, burning, staring with blind eyes.

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Then it disappeared. The man spread-eagled on the ground disappeared, too. He turned into a blur of action that whipped through the crew, locating and destroying cameras, recorders, all identification apparatus. Then the blur seized the girl in the Renaissance gown and vanished.

The Spanish Stairs came to life again, painfully, as though struggling out of a nightmare. The bewildered Intelligence crew clustered around Y'ang-Yeovil.

"What in God's name was that, Yeo?"

"I think it was our man. Gully Foyle. You saw that tattooed face."

"And the burning clothes!"

"Looked like a witch at the stake."

"But if that burning man was Foyle, who were we wasting our time on?"

"I don't know. Does the Commando Brigade have an Intelligence service they haven't bothered to mention to us?"

"Why the Commandos, Yeo?"

"You saw the way he accelerated, didn't you? He destroyed every record we made."

"I still can't believe my eyes."

"That was top secret Commando technique. They take their men apart and rewire and regear them. I'll have to check with Mars HQ and find out whether Commando Brigade's running a parallel investigation."

"Does the army tell the navy?"

"They'll tell Intelligence," Y'ang-Yeovil said angrily. "This case is critical enough without jurisdictional hassels. And another thing: there was no need to manhandle that girl in the maneuver. It was undisciplined and unnecessary." Y'ang - Yeovil paused, for once unaware of the significant glances passing around him. "I must find out who she is," he added dreamily.

"If she's been regeared, too, it'll be real interesting, Yeo," said a bland voice, markedly devoid of implication. "Boy Meets Commando."

Y'ang - Yeovil flushed. "All right," he blurted. "I'm transparent."

"Just repetitious, Yeo. All your romances start the same way. 'There's no need to manhandle that girl.' And then Dolly Quaker, Jean Webster, Gwynn Roget, Marion—"

"No names, please!" a shocked voice interrupted. "Does Romeo tell Juliet?"

"You're all going on latrine assignment tomorrow," Y'ang-Yeovil said. "I'm damned if I'll stand for this salacious insubordination. No, not tomorrow; but as soon as this case is closed." His hawk-face darkened. "What a mess! Will you ever forget Foyle standing there like a burning brand?

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But where is he? What's he up to? What's it all mean?"

11

PRESTEIGN of Presteign's mansion in Central Park was ablaze for the New Year. Charming antique electric bulbs with zigzag filaments and pointed tips shed yellow light. The jaunte-proof maze had been removed and the great door was open for the special occasion. The interior of the house was protected from the gaze of the crowd outside by a jeweled screen just inside the door.

The sightseers buzzed and exclaimed as the famous and near-famous of clan and sept arrived by car, by coach, by litter, by every form of luxurious transportation. Presteign of Presteign himself stood before the door, iron-gray, handsome, smiling his basilisk smile, and welcomed society to his open house. Hardly had a celebrity stepped through the door and disappeared behind the screen when another, even more famous, came clattering up in a vehicle even more fabulous.

The Colas arrived in a band wagon. The Esso family (six sons, three daughters) was magnificent in a glass-topped Greyhound bus. But Greyhound arrived (in an Edison Electric Runabout) hard on their heels and there was much laughter and chaffing at the door. But when Edison of Westinghouse dismounted from his Esso-fueled gasoline buggy, completing the circle, the laughter on the steps turned into a roar.

Just as the crowd of guests turned to enter Presteign's home, a distant commotion attracted their attention. It was a rumble, a fierce chatter of pneumatic punches, and an outrageous metallic bellowing. It approached rapidly. The outer fringe of sightseers opened a broad lane. A heavy truck rumbled down the lane. Six men were tumbling baulks of timber out the back of the truck. Following them came a crew of twenty arranging the baulks neatly in rows.

Presteign and his guests watched with amazement. A giant machine approached, bellowing and pounding, crawling over the ties. Behind it were deposited parallel rails of welded steel. Crews with pneumatic sledges spiked the rails to the timber ties. The track was laid to Presteign's door in a sweeping arc and then curved away. The bellowing engine and crews disappeared into the darkness.

"Good God!" Presteign was distinctly heard to say. Guests poured out of the house to watch.

A shrill whistle sounded in the distance. Down the track came a man on a white horse, carrying a

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large red flag. Behind him panted a steam locomotive drawing a single observation car. The train stopped before Presteign's door. A conductor swung down from the car, followed by a pullman porter. The porter arranged steps. A lady and gentleman in evening clothes descended.

"Shan't be long," the gentleman told the conductor. "Come back for me in an hour."

"Good God!" Presteign exclaimed again.

THE train puffed off. The couple mounted the steps.

"Good evening, Presteign," the gentleman said. "Terribly sorry about that horse messing up your grounds, but the old New York franchise still insists on the red flag in front of trains."

"Fourmyle!" the guests shouted.

"Fourmyle of Ceres!" the sightseers cheered.

Presteign's party was now an assured success.

Inside the vast velvet and plush reception hall, Presteign examined Fourmyle curiously. Foyle endured the keen gaze with equanimity, meanwhile nodding and smiling to the enthusiastic admirers he had acquired from Canberra to New York, with whom Robin Wednesbury was chatting.

"Control," he thought. *"He grilled me in his office for one hour after that crazy attempt I made on Vorga. Will he recognize me?* Your face is familiar, Presteign," Fourmyle said. "Have we met before?"

"I have not had the honor of meeting a Fourmyle until tonight," Presteign answered ambiguously.

Foyle had trained himself to read men, but Presteign's hard, handsome features were unreadable. Standing face to face, the one detached and compelled, the other reserved and indomitable, they looked like a pair of brazen statues at white heat, on the verge of running molten.

"I'm told that you are proud of being an upstart, Fourmyle."

"Yes. I've patterned myself after the first Presteign."

"Indeed?"

"You will remember that he boasted of starting the family fortune in the plasma black market during the Third World War."

"The second, Fourmyle. But the hypocrites of our clan never acknowledge him. The name was Payne then."

"I know."

"And what was your unhappy name before you changed it to Fourmyle?"

"It was Presteign."

"Indeed?" The basilisk smile acknowledged the hit. "You claim a relationship with our clan?"

"I will claim it in time."

"Of what degree?"

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"Let's say a close blood relationship."

"I detect a certain fascination for blood in you, Fourmyle."

"No doubt a family weakness, Presteign."

"You're pleased to be cynical," Presteign said, not without cynicism, "but you speak the truth. We have always had a fatal weakness for blood and money. It is our vice. I admit it."

"And I share it."

"A passion for blood and money?"

"Most passionately."

"Without mercy, without forgiveness, without hypocrisy?"

"And completely without conscience."

"Fourmyle, you are a young man after my own heart. If you do not claim a relationship with our clan, I shall be forced to adopt you."

"You're too late, Presteign. I've already adopted you."

PRESTEIGN took Foyle's arm. "You must be presented to my daughter, Lady Olivia. Will you allow me?"

They crossed the reception hall. Foyle hesitated, wondering whether he should call Robin to stand by for impending emergencies, but he was too triumphant. *"He doesn't know. He'll never know."* Then doubt came: *"But I'll never know if he does know. He's crucible steel. He could teach me about control."*

Acquaintances hailed Fourmyle.

"Wonderful deception you worked in Shanghai."

"Marvelous carnival in Rome, wasn't it? Did you hear about the burning man who appeared on the Spanish Stairs?"

"We looked for you in London."

"What a splendid entrance that was," Harry Sherwin-Williams called. "Outdid us all, Fourmyle. Made us look like a pack of damned pikers."

"You forget yourself, Harry," Presteign said coldly. "You know I permit no profanity in my home."

"Sorry, Presteign. Where's the circus now, Fourmyle?"

"I don't know," Foyle said. "Just a moment."

A crowd gathered, grinning in anticipation of the latest Fourmyle folly. He took out a platinum watch and snapped open the case. The face of a valet appeared on the dial.

"Ahhh — whatever your name is — where are we staying just now?"

The answer was tiny and tinny. "You gave orders to make New York your permanent residence, Fourmyle."

"Oh? Did I? And?"

"We bought St. Patrick's Cathedral, Fourmyle."

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"And where is that?"

"Old St. Patrick's, Fourmyle. On Fifth Avenue and what was formerly 50th Street. We've pitched the camp inside."

"Thank you." Fourmyle closed the platinum Hunter. "There's one thing to be said for the outlawed religions: At least they built churches big enough to house a circus."

Olivia Presteign was seated on a dais, surrounded by admirers paying court to this beautiful albino daughter of Presteign. She was strangely and wonderfully blind, for she could see in the infra-red only, from 7,500 Ångströms to one millimeter wavelengths far below the normal visible spectrum. She saw heat waves, magnetic fields, radio waves; she saw her admirers in a strange light of organic emanations against a background of red radiation.

She was a Snow Maiden, an Ice Princess with coral eyes and coral lips, imperious, mysterious, unattainable. Foyle looked at her once and lowered his eyes in confusion before the blind gaze that could only see him as electromagnetic waves and infra-red light. His pulse began to beat faster; a hundred lightning fantasies about himself and Olivia Presteign flashed in his heart.

"Don't be a fool!" he thought desperately. *"Control yourself. Stop dreaming. This can be dangerous . . ."*

HE WAS introduced, was addressed in a husky, silvery voice, was given a cool, slim hand; but the hand seemed to explode within his with an electric shock. It was almost a start of mutual recognition . . . almost a joining of emotional impact.

"This is insane. She's a symbol. The Dream Princess. The Unattainable. Control!"

He was fighting so hard that he scarcely realized he had been dismissed, graciously and indifferently. He could not believe it. He stood gaping like a lout.

"What? Are you still here, Fourmyle?"

"I couldn't believe I'd been dismissed, Lady Olivia."

"Hardly that, but I'm afraid you are in the way of my friends."

"I'm not used to being dismissed. *No. No. All wrong!* At least by someone I'd like to count as a friend."

"Don't be tedious, Fourmyle. Do step down."

"How have I offended you?"

"Offended me? Now you're being ridiculous."

"Lady Olivia . . . *Can't I say anything right? Where's Robin?* Can we start again, please?"

"If you're trying to be gauche, Fourmyle, you're succeeding."

"Your hand again, please.

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Thank you. I'm Fourmyle of Ceres."

She laughed. "I'll concede you're a clown. Now do step down. I'm sure you can find someone to amuse."

"What's happened this time?" he demanded.

"Really, sir, are you trying to make me angry?"

"No. *Yes, I am. Trying to touch you somehow, cut through the ice.* The first time, our handclasp was — violent. Now it's nothing. What happened?"

"Fourmyle," Olivia said wearily, "I'll grant that you're amusing, original, witty, fascinating — I'll grant you anything, anything you wish, if you will only go away."

He stumbled off the dais. *"Bitch. Bitch. Bitch. No. She's the dream just as I dreamed her. The icy pinnacle to be stormed and taken."*

He came face to face with Saul Dagenham.

He stood paralyzed.

"Ah, Fourmyle," Presteign said. "This is Saul Dagenham. He can only give us thirty minutes and he insists on spending one of them with you."

"Does he know? Did he send for Dagenham to make sure? Attack. Toujours audace. What happened to your face, Dagenham?" Fourmyle asked with detached curiosity.

THE death's-head smiled. "And I thought I was famous. Radiation poisoning. Time was when they said 'Hotter than a pistol.' Now they say 'Hotter than Dagenham.'" The deadly eyes raked Foyle. "What's behind that circus of yours?"

"A passion for notoriety."

"I'm an old hand at camouflage myself. I recognize the signs. What's your larceny?"

"Did Dillinger tell Capone?" Foyle smiled back, beginning to relax, restraining his triumph. *"I've outfaced them both.* You look happier, Dagenham." Instantly he realized the slip.

Dagenham picked it up in a flash. "Happier than when? Where did we meet before?"

"Not happier than when; happier than me." Foyle turned to Presteign. "I've fallen desperately in love with Lady Olivia."

"Saul, your half hour's up."

Dagenham and Presteign, on either side of Foyle, turned. A tall woman approached, stately in an emerald evening gown, her red hair gleaming. It was Jisbella McQueen. Before the shock could seethe into his face, Foyle turned, ran six steps to the first door he saw, opened it and darted through.

The door slammed behind him. He was in a short blind corridor. There was a click, a pause, and then a canned voice spoke courteously: "You have invaded a pri-

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vate portion of this residence. Please return."

Foyle gasped and struggled with himself.

"You have invaded a private portion of this residence. Please return."

"I never knew. Thought she was killed out there. She recognized me . . ."

"You have invaded a private portion of this residence. Please return."

"I'm finished. She'll never forgive me. Must be telling Dagenham and Presteign now."

The door from the Reception Hall opened, and for a moment, Foyle thought he saw his flaming image. Then he realized he was looking at Jisbella's flaming hair. She made no move, just stood and smiled at him in furious triumph. He straightened.

"By God, I won't go down whining."

Without haste, Foyle sauntered out of the corridor, took Jisbella's arm and led her back to the Reception Hall. He never bothered to look around for Dagenham or Presteign. They would present themselves, with force and arms, in due time. He smiled at Jisbella; she smiled back, still in triumph.

"Thanks for running away, Gully. I never dreamed it could be so satisfying."

"Running away? My dear Jiz!"

"Well?"

"I can't tell you how lovely you're looking tonight. We've come a long way from Gouffre Martel, haven't we?" Foyle motioned to the ballroom. "Dance?"

HER eyes widened in surprise at his composure. She permitted him to escort her to the ballroom and take her in his arms.

"By the way, Jiz, how did you manage to keep out of Gouffre Martel?"

"Dagenham arranged it. So you dance now, Gully?"

"I dance, speak four languages miserably, study science and philosophy, write pitiful poetry, blow myself up with idiotic experiments, fence like a fool, box like a buffoon . . . In short, I'm the notorious Fourmyle of Ceres."

"No longer Gully Foyle."

"Only to you, dear, and whoever you've told."

"Just Dagenham. Are you sorry I blew your secret?"

"You couldn't help yourself any more than I could."

"No, I couldn't. Your name just popped out of me. What would you have paid me to keep my mouth shut?"

"Don't be a fool, Jiz. This accident's going to earn you about Cr 17,980,000."

"What d'you mean?"

"I told you I'd give you what was left after I finished *Vorga*."

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"You've finished *Vorga*?" she said in surprise.

"No, dear, you've finished me. But I'll keep my promise."

She laughed. "Generous Gully Foyle. Be real generous, Gully. Make a run for it. Entertain me a little."

"Squealing like a rat? I don't know how, Jiz. I'm trained for hunting; nothing else."

"And I killed the tiger. Give me one satisfaction, Gully. Say you were close to *Vorga*. I ruined you when you were half a step from the finish. Yes?"

"I wish I could, Jiz, but I can't. I'm nowhere. I was trying to pick up another lead to *Vorga* here tonight."

"Poor Gully. Maybe I can help you out of this jam. I can say—oh, that I made a mistake—or a joke—that you really aren't Gully Foyle. I know how to confuse Saul. I can do it, Gully—if you still love me."

He looked down at her and shook his head. "It's never been love between us, Jiz. You know that. I'm too one-track to be anything but a hunter."

"Too one-track to be anything but a fool!"

"What did you mean, Jiz—Dagenham arranged to keep you out of Gouffre Martel and you know how to confuse him? What have you got to do with Dagenham?"

"I work for him. I'm one of his couriers."

"You mean he's blackmailing you? Threatening to send you back if you don't—"

"No. We hit it off the minute we met. He started off capturing me; I ended up capturing him."

"How do you mean?"

"Can't you guess?"

FOYLE stared at her. Her eyes were veiled, but he understood. "Jiz! With him?"

"Yes."

"But how? He's radioactive. He—"

"There are precautions. It's . . . I don't want to talk about it, Gully."

"Sorry. He's a long time returning."

"Returning?"

"Dagenham. With his army."

"Oh. Yes, of course." Jisbella laughed again, then spoke in a low, furious tone. "You don't know what a tightrope you've been walking, Gully. If you'd begged or bribed or tried to romance me . . . damn you, I'd have ruined you. I'd have told the world who you were, screamed it from the housetops—"

"What are you talking about?"

"Saul isn't returning. He doesn't know. You can go to hell on your own."

"I don't believe you."

"D'you think it would take him

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this long to get you? Saul Dagenham?"

"But why didn't you tell him? After the way I ran out on you—"

"Because I don't want him going to hell with you. I'm not talking about *Vorga*. I mean something else. PyrE. That's what they're after—twenty pounds of PyrE."

"What's that?"

"When you got the safe open, was there a small box in it? Made of ILI—Inert Lead Isomer?"

"Yes."

"What was inside the ILI box?"

"Twenty slugs that looked like compressed iodine crystals."

"What did you do with the slugs?"

"Sent two out for analysis. No one could find out what they are. I'm trying to run an analysis on a third in my lab—when I'm not clowning for the public."

"Oh, you are, are you? Why?"

"I'm growing up, Jiz," Foyle said gently. "It didn't take much to figure out that was what Presteign and Dagenham were after."

"Where have you got the rest of the slugs?"

"In a safe place."

"They're not safe. They can't ever be safe. I don't know what PyrE is, but I know it's the road to hell and I don't want Saul walking it."

"You love him that much?"

"I respect him that much. He's the first man who ever showed me an excuse for the double standard."

"Jiz, what is PyrE? You know."

"I've guessed. I've pieced together the hints I've heard. And I could tell you, Gully, but I won't." The fury in her face was luminous. "I'm running out on you this time. I'm leaving you to hang helpless in the dark. See what it feels like!"

SHE broke away from him and swept across the ballroom floor. At that moment, the first bombs fell.

They came in like meteor swarms; not so many, but far more deadly. They came in on the morning quadrant, that quarter of the globe in darkness from midnight to dawn. They collided head-on with the forward side of the Earth in its revolution around the Sun. They had been traveling a distance of four hundred million miles.

Their excessive speed was matched by the rapidity of the Terran defense computers which traced and intercepted these New Year gifts from the Outer Satellites within the space of microseconds. A multitude of fierce new stars prickled in the sky and vanished; they were bombs detected and detonated five hundred miles above their target.

But so narrow was the margin

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between speed of defense and speed of attack that some got through. They shot through the aurora level, the meteor level, the twilight limit, the stratosphere, and down to Earth. The invisible trajectories ended in titanic convulsions.

The first atomic explosion which destroyed Newark shook the Presteign mansion with an unbelievable quake. Floors and walls shuddered and the guests were thrown in heaps along with furniture and decorations. Quake followed quake as the random shower descended around New York. They were deafening, numbing, chilling. The sounds, the shocks, the flares of lurid light on the horizon were so enormous that reason was stripped from humanity, leaving nothing but flayed animals to shriek, cower and run. Within the space of seconds, Presteign's New Year party was transformed from elegance into anarchy.

Foyle arose from the floor. He looked at the struggling bodies on the ballroom parquet, saw Jisbella fighting to free herself, took a step toward her and then stopped. He revolved his head dazedly, feeling it was no part of him. The thunder never ceased. He saw Robin Wednesbury in the Reception Hall, reeling and battered. He took a step toward her and then stopped again. He knew precisely where he must go.

He accelerated. The thunder and lightning dropped down the spectrum to grinding and flickering. The shuddering quakes turned into greasy undulations. Foyle blurred through the giant house, searching, until at last he found her in the garden, standing tiptoe on a marble bench, looking like a marble statue to his accelerated senses — the statue of exaltation.

HE DECELERATED. Sensation leaped up the spectrum again and once more he was buffeted by that bigger-than-death-size bombardment.

"Lady Olivia," he called.

"Who is that?"

"The clown."

"Fourmyle?"

"Yes."

"And you came searching for me? I'm touched, really touched."

"You're insane to be standing out here like this. I beg you to let me —"

"No, no, no. It's beautiful. Magnificent!"

"Let me jaunte with you to some place that's safe."

"Ah, you see yourself as a knight in armor? Chivalry to the rescue. You haven't the flair for it. You'd best go."

"I'll stay."

"As a beauty-lover?"

"As a lover."

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"You're still tedious, Fourmyle. Come, be inspired. This is Armageddon. Flowering Monstrosity. Tell me what you see."

"There's nothing much," he answered, looking around and wincing. "There's light all over the horizon. Quick clouds of it. Above, there's a—a sort of sparkling effect. Like Christmas lights twinkling."

"Oh, you see so little with your eyes! See what I see! There's a dome in the sky, a rainbow dome. The colors run from deep tang to brilliant burn. That's what I've named the colors I see. What would that dome be?"

"The radar screen."

"And then there are vasty shafts of fire thrusting up and swaying, weaving, dancing, sweeping. What are they?"

"Interceptor beams. You're seeing the whole electronic defense system."

"And I can see the bombs coming down, too—swift streaks of what you call red. But not your red. Mine. Why can I see them?"

"They're heated by air friction, but the inert lead casing doesn't show the color to us."

"See how much better you're doing as Galileo than Galahad. Oh! There's one coming down in the east. Watch for it! It's coming, coming, coming . . . Now!"

A flare of light on the eastern horizon proved it was not her imagination. It was very real.

"There's another to the north. Very close. Very. Now!"

A SHOCK tore down from the north.

"And the explosions, Fourmyle," she said breathlessly. "They're not just clouds of light. They're fabrics, webs, tapestries of meshing colors. So beautiful. Like exquisite shrouds."

"Which they are, Lady Olivia," muttered Foyle.

"Are you afraid?"

"Yes."

"Then run away."

"No."

"Ah, you're defiant."

"I don't know what I am. I'm scared, but I won't run."

"Then you're making a show of knightly courage." The husky voice sounded amused. "Just think, Fourmyle. How long does it take to jaunte? You could be safe in seconds—in Mexico, Canada, Alaska. There must be millions there now. We're probably the last left in the city."

"Not everybody can jaunte so far and so fast."

"Then we're the last left who count. Why don't you leave me? Save yourself. I'll be killed soon. No one will ever know you turned tail."

"Bitch!"

"Ah, you're angry. What shocking language. It's the first sign of

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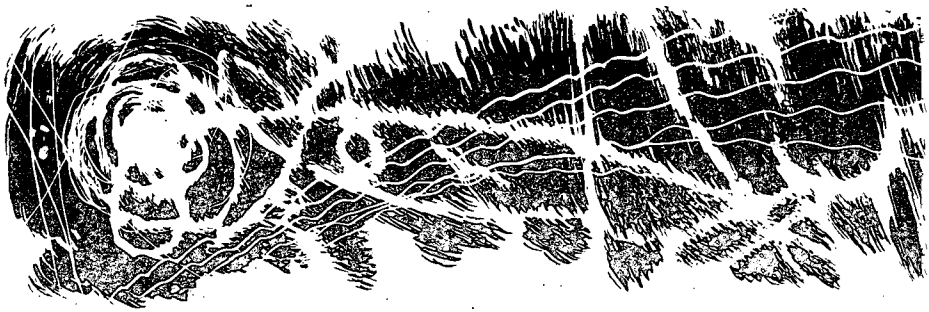

weakness. Why don't you exercise your better judgment and carry me off? That would be the second sign."

"Damn you!"

He stepped close to her, clenching his fists in rage. She touched his cheek with a cool, quiet hand, but once again there was that electric shock.

"No, it's too late, my dear," she said quietly. "Here comes a whole cluster of red streaks—down, down, down—directly at us. There'll be no escaping this. Jaunte! Take me with you. Quick! Quick!"

He swept her off the bench. "Bitch! Never!"

He held her, found the soft coral mouth and kissed her, bruised her lips with his, waiting for the final blackout.

The concussion never came.

"Tricked!" he exclaimed. She laughed. He kissed her again and at last forced himself to release her. She gasped for breath, then laughed again, her coral eyes blazing.

"It's over," she said.

"It hasn't begun yet."

"What do you mean?"

"The war between us."

"Make it a human war," she said fiercely. "You're the first not to be deceived by my looks. Oh, God! The boredom of the chivalrous knights and their milk-warm passion for the fairy-tale princess. But I'm not like that inside. I'm not. Never! Make it a savage war between us. Don't win me—destroy me!"

SUDDENLY she was Lady Olivia again, the gracious snow maiden. "I'm afraid the bombardment has finished, my dear Fourmyle. The show is over. But what an exciting prelude to the New Year. Good night."

"Good night?" he echoed incredulously.

"Good night," she repeated. "Really, my dear Fourmyle, are

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you so gauche that you never know when you're dismissed? You may go now. Good night."

He hesitated, searched for words, and at last turned and lurched out of the house. He was trembling with elation and confusion. He walked in a daze, scarcely aware of the confusion and disaster around him. The horizon now was lit with the light of red flames. The shock waves of the assault had whipped the atmosphere so violently that winds still whistled in strange gusts. Brick, cornice, glass and metal were tumbling and crashing. And this despite the fact that no direct hit had been made on New York.

The streets were empty; the city was deserted. The entire population of New York, of every city, had jaunted in a desperate search for safety, to the limit of their ability—five miles, fifty miles, five hundred miles. Some had jaunted into the center of a direct hit. Thousands died in jaunte explosions, for the stages had not been designed to accommodate a mass exodus.

Foyle became aware of white-armored Disaster Crews appearing on the streets. An imperious signal warned him that he was about to be summarily drafted for disaster work. The problem of jaunting was not to get populations out of cities, but to force them to return and restore order. Foyle had no intention of spending a week fighting fire and looters. He accelerated and evaded the Disaster Crew.

At Fifth Avenue, he decelerated. The drain of acceleration was so enormous that he was reluctant to maintain it for more than a few moments. Long periods of acceleration demanded days of recuperation.

The looters and Jack-jaunters were already at work on the avenue, singly, in swarms, furtive yet savage, jackals rending the body of a living but helpless animal. They descended on Foyle. Anything was their prey tonight.

"I'm not in the mood," he told them. "Play with somebody else."

He emptied the money out of his pockets and tossed it to them. They snapped it up but were not satisfied. They desired entertainment and he looked like a helpless gentleman. Half a dozen surrounded Foyle and closed in.

"We're going to have a party," one said.

Foyle had once seen the mutilated body of one of their party guests. He sighed and detached his mind from visions of Olivia Presteign.

"All right, jackals," he said. "Let's have a party."

THEY prepared to send him into a screaming dance. Foyle tripped the switchboard in his

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mouth and became for twelve devastating seconds the most murderous machine ever devised —the Commando killer. It was done without conscious thought or volition; his body merely followed the directive taped into muscle and reflex. He left six jackals stretched on the street and jaunted to old St. Pat's.

The cathedral still stood, unblemished, eternal, the distant fires flickering on the green copper of its roof. Inside, it was deserted. The tents of the Four Mile Circus filled the nave, illuminated and furnished, but the circus personnel was gone. Servants, chefs, valets, athletes, philosophers, camp-followers and crooks had fled.

"But they'll be back to loot," Foyle murmured.

He entered his own tent. The first thing he saw was a figure in white, crouched on a rug, crooning sunnily to itself. It was Robin Wednesbury, her gown in tatters, her mind in tatters.

"Robin!"

She went on crooning wordlessly. He pulled her up, shook her and slapped her. She beamed and crooned. He filled a syringe and gave her a tremendous shot of Niacin. The sobering wrench on her pathetic flight from reality was ghastly. Her satin skin turned ashen. The beautiful face twisted. She recognized Foyle, remembered what she had tried to forget, screamed and sank to her knees. She began to cry.

"That's better," he told her. "You're a great one for escape, aren't you? First suicide, now this. What next?"

"Go away."

"Probably religion. I can see you joining a cellar sect with passwords like *Pax Vobiscum.* Bible smuggling and martyrdom for the faith. Can't you ever face up to anything?"

"Don't you ever run away?"

"Escape is for cripples, neurotics."

"Neurotics. The favorite word of the Johnny-Come-Lately educated. You're so educated, aren't you? So poised. So balanced. You've been running away all your life."

"Me? Never. I've been hunting all my life."

"You've been running. Haven't you ever heard of Attack-Escape? To run away from reality by attacking it, denying it, destroying it? That's what you've been doing."

FOYLE was brought up with a jolt. "Attack-Escape? You mean I've been running away from something?"

"Obviously."

"From what?"

"You can't accept life as it is. You refuse. You attack it, try to

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force it into your own pattern. You attack and destroy everything that stands in the way of your own insane pattern." She lifted her tear-stained face. "I can't stand it any more. I want you to let me go."

"What about your family?"

"And find them my own way."

"Why? What now?"

"It's too much, you and the war, because you're as bad as the war. Worse. What happened to me tonight is what happens to me every moment I'm with you. I can stand one or the other, not both."

"No," he said. "I need you."

"I'm prepared to buy my way out."

"How?"

"You've lost all your leads to *Vorga*, haven't you?"

"And?"

"I've found another."

"Where?"

"Never mind where. Will you agree to let me go if I turn it over to you?"

"I can take it from you."

"Go ahead, take it." Her eyes flashed. "If you know what it is, you won't have any trouble."

"I can make you give it to me."

"Can you? After the bombing tonight? Try."

He was taken aback by her defiance. "How do I know you're not bluffing?"

"I'll give you one hint. Remember the man in Australia?"

"Forrest?"

"Yes. He tried to tell you the names of the crew. Do you remember the only name he got out?"

"Kemp."

"He died before he could finish it. The name is Kempsey."

"That's your lead?"

"Yes. Name and address. In return for your promise to let me go."

"It's a sale," he said. "You can go. Give it to me."

SHE went at once to the travel dress she had worn in Shanghai. From the pocket, she took out a sheet of partially burned paper.

"I saw this on Sergei Orel's desk when I was trying to put the fire out—the fire the Burning Man started."

She handed him the sheet of paper. It was a fragment of a begging letter. It read:

do anything to get out of these bacteria fields. Why should a man just because he can't jaunte get treated like a dog? Please help me, Serg. Help an old shipmate off a ship we don't mention. You can spare Cr 100. Remember all the favors I done you? Send Cr 100 or even Cr 50. Don't let me down.

Rodg Kempsey
Barracks 3
Bacteria, Inc.
Mare Nubium
Moon

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"By God!" Foyle exclaimed. "This is the lead! We can't fail this time. He'll spill everything—everything!" He grinned at Robin. "We leave for the Moon tomorrow night. Book passage. No, there'll be trouble on account of the attack. Buy a ship. They'll be unloading them cheap enough, anyway."

"We?" Robin said. "You mean you."

"We're going to the Moon. Both of us."

"I'm leaving."

"You're not leaving. You're staying with me."

"But you swore you'd—"

"Grow up, girl. I had to swear to anything to get this. I need you more than ever now. Not for *Vorga*. I'll handle *Vorga* myself. For something much more important."

He looked at her incredulous face and smiled ruefully. "If you'd given me this letter two hours ago, I'd have kept my word. But it's too late now. I need a Romance Secretary. I'm in love with Olivia Presteign."

She leaped to her feet in a blaze of fury. *"You're in love with her? Olivia Presteign? In love with that white corpse!"* The bitter fury of her telesending was a startling revelation to him. *"Ah, now you have lost me. Forever. Now I'll destroy you!"*

She disappeared.

12

CAPTAIN Peter Y'ang-Yeovil was handling reports at Central Intelligence Hq. in London at the rate of six per minute. Information was phoned in, wired in, cabled in, jaunted in. The bombardment picture unfolded rapidly.

ATTACK SATURATED N & S AMERICA FROM 60° TO 120° WEST LONGITUDE . . . LABRADOR TO ALASKA IN N . . . RIO TO ECUADOR IN S . . . ESTIMATED TEN PER CENT (10%) MISSILES PENETRATED INTERCEPTION SCREEN . . . ESTIMATED POPULATION LOSS: TEN TO TWELVE MILLIONS . . .

"If it wasn't for jaunting," Y'ang-Yeovil said, "the losses would have been five times that. All the same, it's close to a knockout. One more punch like that and Terra's finished."

He addressed this to the assistants jaunting in and out of his office, appearing and disappearing, dropping reports on his desk and chalking results and equations on the glass blackboard that covered one entire wall. Informality was the rule and Y'ang-Yeovil was surprised and suspicious when an assistant knocked on his door and entered with elaborate formality.

"What larceny now?" he asked.

"Lady to see you, Yeo."

"Is this the time for comedy?"

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Y'ang-Yeovil said in exasperated tones. He pointed to the Whitehead equations spelling disaster on the transparent blackboard. "Read that and weep on the way out."

"Very special lady, Yeo. Your Venus from the Spanish Stairs."

"Who? What Venus?"

"Your Congo Venus."

"Oh, that one." Y'ang-Yeovil hesitated. "Send her in."

"You'll interview her in private, of course."

"Of course nothing. There's a war on. Keep those reports coming, but tip everybody to switch to Secret Speech if they have to talk to me."

Robin Wednesbury entered the office, still wearing the torn white evening gown. She had jaunted without bothering to change. Her face was strained but lovely. Y'ang-Yeovil gave her a split-second inspection and realized that his first appreciation of her had not been mistaken. Robin returned the inspection and her eyes dilated. "But you're the cook from the Spanish Stairs! Angelo Poggi!"

AS AN Intelligence Officer, Y'ang-Yeovil was prepared to deal with this crisis. "Not a cook, madam. I haven't had time to change back to my usual fascinating self. Please sit here, Miss . . . ?"

"Wednesbury. Robin Wednesbury."

"Charmed. I'm Captain Y'ang-Yeovil. How nice of you to come and see me. You've saved me a long, hard search."

"B-but I don't understand. What were you doing on the Spanish Stairs? Why were you hunting—?"

Y'ang-Yeovil saw that her lips weren't moving. "Ah? You're a telepath, Miss Wednesbury? How is that possible? I thought I knew every telepath in the Solar System."

"I'm not a full telepath. I'm a telesend. I can only send, not receive."

"Which, of course, makes you worthless to the world. I see." Y'ang-Yeovil cocked a sympathetic eye at her. "What a dirty trick, Miss Wednesbury, to be saddled with all the disadvantages of telepathy and be deprived of all the advantages. I do sympathize. Believe me."

"Bless him! He's the first ever to realize that without being told."

"Careful, Miss Wednesbury, I'm receiving you. Now about the Spanish Stairs?"

He paused, listening intently to her agitated telesending: *"Why was he hunting? Me? Alien Bellig— Oh, God! Will they hurt me? Cut and— Information. I—"*

"My dear girl," Y'ang-Yeovil said gently, "listen to me a mo-

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ment. You're an Alien Belligerent?"

She nodded.

"That's unfortunate, but we won't worry about it now. About Intelligence cutting and slicing information out of people — that's all propaganda."

"Propaganda?"

"We're not maladroits, Miss Wednesbury. We know how to extract information without being Medieval. But we spread the legend to soften people up in advance, so to speak."

"Is that true? He's lying. It's a trick."

"It's true, Miss Wednesbury. I do finesse, but there's no need now. Not when you've evidently come of your own free will to offer information."

"He's too adroit, too quick. He —"

"You sound as though you've been badly tricked recently, Miss Wednesbury. Badly burned."

"I have. I have. *By myself, mostly. I'm a fool. A hateful fool."*

"Never a fool, Miss Wednesbury, and never hateful. I don't know what's happened to shatter your opinion of yourself, but I hope to restore it. So you've been deceived, have you? By yourself, mostly? We all do that. But you've been helped by someone. Who?"

"I'm betraying him."

"Then don't tell me."

"But I've got to find my mother and sisters. I can't trust him any more. I've got to do it myself." Robin took a deep breath. "I want to tell you about a man named Gulliver Foyle."

Y'ang-Yeovil at once got down to business.

"IS IT true he arrived by railroad?" Olivia Presteign asked. "In a locomotive and observation car? What wonderful audacity!"

"Yes, he's a remarkable young man," Presteign answered. He stood, iron-gray and iron-hard, in the Reception Hall of his home, alone with his daughter. He was guarding honor and life while he waited for servants and staff to return from their panic-stricken jaunte to safety. He chatted imperturbably with Olivia, never once permitting her to realize their grave danger.

"Father, I'm exhausted."

"It's been a trying night, my dear. But please don't retire yet."

"Why not?"

Presteign refrained from telling her that she would be safer with him. "I'm lonely, Olivia. We'll talk for a few minutes."

"I did a daring thing, Father. I watched the attack from the garden."

"My dear! Alone?"

"No. With Fourmyle."

A heavy pounding began to

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shake the front door which Presteign had closed.

"What's that?"

"Looters," Presteign answered calmly. "Don't be alarmed, Olivia. They won't get in." He stepped to a table on which he had laid out an assortment of weapons as neatly as a game of patience. "There's no danger, my love." He tried to distract her. "You were telling me about Fourmyle—"

"Oh, yes. We watched together, describing the bombing to each other."

"Unchaperoned? That wasn't discreet, Olivia."

"I know. I behaved disgracefully. He seemed so big, so sure of himself, that I gave him the Lady Hauteur treatment. He was furious, Father. That's why he came looking for me in the garden."

"And you permitted him to remain? I'm shocked, dear."

"I am, too. I think I was half out of my mind with excitement. What's he like, Father? Tell me. What does he look like to you?"

"He *is* big. Tall, very dark, rather enigmatic. Like a Borgia. He seems to alternate between assurance and savagery."

"I could see it myself. He glows with danger. Most people just shimmer; he looks like a lightning bolt. It's terribly fascinating."

"My dear," Presteign remonstrated gently, "unmarried females are too modest to talk like that. It would displease me, my love, if you were to form a romantic attachment for a parvenu like Fourmyle of Ceres."

THE Presteign staff jaunted into the Reception Hall, cooks, waitresses, footmen, pages, coachmen, valets, maids. All were shaken and hang-dog after their flight from death.

"You have deserted your posts. It will be remembered," Presteign said coldly. "My safety and honor are again in your hands. Guard them. Lady Olivia and I will retire."

He took his daughter's arm and led her up the stairs, fiercely protective of his ice-pure princess. "Blood and money," Presteign murmured.

"What, Father?"

"I was thinking of a family vice, Olivia. I was thanking fortune that you have not inherited it."

"What vice is that?"

"There's no need for you to know. It's one that Fourmyle shares."

"Like a Borgia, you said. A wicked Borgia with black eyes and lines in his face. That must account for the pattern."

"Pattern, my dear?"

"Yes. I can see a strange pattern over his face—not the usual electricity of nerve and muscle. Something laid over that. It fascinated me from the beginning."

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"What sort of pattern do you mean?"

"Fantastic. Wonderfully evil. I can't describe it. Give me something to write with. I'll show you."

They stopped before a six-hundred-year-old Chippendale cabinet. Presteign took out a silver-mounted slab of crystal and handed it to Olivia. She touched it with her fingertip; a black dot appeared. She moved her finger and the dot elongated into a line. With quick strokes, she sketched the hideous swirls and blazons of a Maori devil-mask.

SAUL DAGENHAM left the darkened bedroom. A moment later, it was flooded with light as one wall illuminated. It seemed as though a giant mirror reflected Jisbella's bedroom, but with one odd quirk. Jisbel'a lay in the bed alone, but in the reflection Saul Dagenham sat on the edge of the bed alone. The mirror was, in fact, a sheet of lead glass separating identical rooms. Dagenham had just illuminated his.

"Love by the clock." Dagenham's voice came through a speaker. "Disgusting."

"No, Saul. Never."

"Frustrating."

"Not that, either," she said.

"But unhappy."

"No. You're greedy. Be content with what you've got."

"It's more than I ever had. You're truly magnificent, Saul."

"You're extravagant. Now go to sleep, darling. We're skiing tomorrow."

"There's been a change of plan. I've got to work."

"Oh, Saul, you promised me! No more working and fretting and running. Aren't you going to keep your promise?"

"I can't with a war on."

"You sacrificed enough in that radioactive accident up at Tycho Sands. They can't ask any more of you."

"I've got one job to finish."

"I'll help you finish it."

"No. You'd best keep out of this, Jisbella."

"You don't trust me."

"I don't want you hurt."

"Nothing can hurt us."

"Foyle can."

"W-what?" she stammered.

"Fourmyle is Foyle. You know that. I know you know."

"But I never—"

"No, you never told me. I said you're magnificent. Keep faith with me the same way, Jisbella."

"Then how did you find out?"

"Foyle slipped."

"How?"

"The name."

"Fourmyle of Ceres? He bought the Ceres company."

"But Geoffrey Fourmyle?"

"He invented it."

"Geoffrey Fourmyle is the name they use in the Megalomania Test

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down in Combined Hospital in Mexico City. I used the Megal Mood on Foyle when I tried to open him up. The name stayed buried in his memory. He dredged it up and throught it was original."

"Poor Gully."

Dagenham smiled. "There's no defense against betrayal, and we all betray ourselves."

"What are you going to do, Saul?"

"Do? Finish him, of course."

"For twenty pounds of PyrE?"

"No. To win a lost war."

"What?" Jisbella came to the glass wall separating the rooms. "You, Saul? Patriotic?"

He nodded almost guiltily. "You've changed me. I'm a sane man again."

He pressed his face to the wall, too, and they kissed through three inches of lead glass.

MARE NUBIUM was ideally suited to the growth of anaerobic bacteria, soil organisms, phage, rare molds and all those microscopic life-forms, essential to medicine and industry, which required airless culture. Bacteria, Inc., was a huge mosaic of culture fields traversed by catwalks spread around a central clump of barracks, offices and factory. Each field was a giant glass vat, one hundred feet in diameter, twelve inches high and no more than two molecules thick at any point.

A day before the sunrise line, creeping across the face of the Moon, reached Mare Nubium, the vats were filled with culture medium. At sunrise, abrupt and blinding on the airless Moon, the vats were seeded, and for the next fourteen days of continuous Sun, they were tended, shielded, regulated, nurtured, the field-workers trudging up and down the catwalks in spacesuits. As the sunset line crept toward Mare Nubium, the vats were harvested and then left to freeze and sterilize in the two-week frost of the Lunar night.

Jaunting was of no use in this tedious step-by-step cultivation. Hence Bacteria, Inc., hired unfortunates incapable of jaunting and paid them slave wages. This was the lowest form of labor, the dregs and scum of the Solar System; and the barracks of Bacteria, Inc., resembled an Inferno during the two-week layoff period. Foyle discovered this when he entered Barracks 3.

He was met by an appalling spectacle. There were two hundred men in the giant room; there were whores and their hard-eyed pimps, professional gamblers and their portable tables, dope-peddlers, money-lenders. There was a haze of acrid smoke and the stench of alcohol and Analogue. Furniture, bedding, clothes, unconscious bodies, empty bottles,

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rotting food were scattered on the floor.

A roar challenged Foyle's appearance, but he was equipped to handle this situation. He spoke to the first hairy face thrust into his.

"Kempsey?" he asked quietly. He was answered outrageously. Nevertheless he grinned and handed the man a Cr 100 note. "Kempsey?" he asked another. He was insulted. He paid again and continued his saunter down the barracks distributing Cr 100 notes in calm thanks for insult and invective.

In the center of the room, he found his key man, the obvious barracks bully, a monster of a man, hairless, fondling two bawds and being fed whiskey by sycophants.

"Kempsey, you?" Foyle asked in the old gutter tongue. "I'm diggin' Rodger Kempsey."

"Diggin' you for broke, me," the man answered, thrusting out a huge paw for Foyle's money. "Gimme."

THERE was a delighted howl from the crowd. Foyle smiled and spat in his eye. There was an abject hush. The hairless man dumped the bawds and surged up to annihilate Foyle. Five seconds later, he was groveling on the floor.

"Still diggin' Kempsey," Foyle said gently. "Diggin' hard, man. You better finger him, man, or you're gone, is all."

"Washroom!" the hairless man howled. "Holed up. Washroom."

"Now you broke me," Foyle said. He dumped the rest of his money on the floor before the hairless man and walked quickly to the washroom.

Kempsey was cowering in the corner of a shower, face pressed to the wall, moaning in a dull rhythm that showed he had been at it for hours.

"Kempsey?"

The moaning answered him.

"What's a matter, you?"

"Clothes," Kempsey wept. "All over, clothes. Like filth, like sick, like dirt. Clothes. All over, clothes."

"Up, man. Get up."

"Clothes. All over, clothes. Like filth, like sick, like dirt . . ."

"Kempsey, mind me, man. Orel sent me."

Kempsey stopped weeping and turned his sodden countenance to Foyle. "Who? Who?"

"Sergei Orel sent me. I've bought your release. You're free. We'll blow."

"When?"

"Now."

"God bless him. Bless him!" Kempsey began to caper in weary exultation. The bruised and bloated face split into a facsimile of laughter. He laughed and capered and Foyle led him out of

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the washroom. But in the barracks, he screamed and wept again, and as Foyle led him down the long room, the bawds swept up armfuls of dirty clothes and shook them before his eyes. Kempsey foamed and gibbered.

"What's a matter, him?" Foyle inquired of the hairless man in the gutter patois.

The hairless man was now a respectful neutral, if not a friend. "Guesses for grabs. Always like that, him. Show old clothes and he twitch. Man!"

"For why, already?"

"For why? Crazy, is all."

At the main-office airlock, Foyle got Kempsey and himself corked in suits and then led him out to the rocket field where a score of anti-grav beams pointed their pale fingers upward from pits to the gibbous Earth hanging in the night sky. They descended a pit, entered Foyle's yawl and uncorked.

Foyle took a bottle and a sting-ampule from a cabinet. He poured a drink and handed it to Kempsey. He hefted the ampule in his palm, smiling.

KEMPSEY drank the whiskey, still dazed, still exulting. "Free! God bless him! Free! You don't know what I've been through." He drank again. "I still can't believe it. It's like a dream. Why don't you take off, man? I—"

Kempsey choked and dropped the glass, staring at Foyle in horror. "Your face! What happened to it?"

"You happened to it, you son of a bitch!" Foyle leaped up, his tiger-face burning, and flung the ampule like a knife. It pierced Kempsey's neck and hung quivering. Kempsey toppled.

Foyle accelerated, blurred to the body, picked it up in mid-fall and carried it aft to the starboard stateroom. There were two main staterooms in the yawl and Foyle had prepared both in advance. The starboard room had been stripped and turned into a surgery. Foyle strapped the body on the operating table, opened a case of surgical instruments, and began the delicate operation he had learned by hypno-training that morning—an operation made possible only by his five-to-one acceleration.

He cut through skin and fascia, sawed through the rib cage, exposed the heart, snipped it out and connected veins and arteries to the intricate blood-pump alongside the table. He started the pump. Twenty seconds, objective time, had elapsed. He placed an oxygen mask over Kempsey's face and switched on the alternating suction and eructation of the oxygen pump.

Foyle decelerated, checked Kempsey's temperature, shot an

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anti-shock series into his veins and waited. Blood gurgled through the pump and Kempsey's body. After five minutes, Foyle removed the oxygen mask. The respiration reflex continued. Kempsey was without a heart, yet alive. Foyle sat down alongside the operating table and waited. The stigmata still showed on his face.

Kempsey awoke, screaming.

Foyle leaped up, tightened the straps and leaned over the heartless man.

"Look at yourself, Kempsey. You're dead."

Kempsey fainted. Foyle brought him to with the oxygen mask.

"Let me die, for God's sake!"

"I died for six months and I didn't whine."

"Let me die!"

"In time, Kempsey. Your sympathetic block's been by-passed, but I'll let you die in time, if you behave. You were aboard *Vorga* on September 16th, 2436?"

"For Christ's sake, let me die!"

"You were aboard *Vorga?*"

"Yes."

"YOU passed a wreck out in space," Foyle pressed on. "Wreck of the *Nomad*. She signaled for help and you passed her by. Yes?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Oh, Christ help me!"

"I was aboard *Nomad,* Kempsey. Why did you leave me to rot?"

"Sweet Jesus, help me! Christ, deliver me!"

"I'll deliver you, Kempsey, if you answer questions. Why did you leave me to rot?"

"Couldn't pick you up."

"Why not?"

"Reffs aboard."

"I guessed right, then. You were running refugees in from Callisto?"

"Yes."

"How many?"

"Six hundred."

"That's a lot, but you could have made room for one more. Why didn't you pick me up?"

"We were scuttling the reffs."

"What!" Foyle cried.

"Overboard . . . all of them . . . six hundred. Stripped 'em . . . took their clothes, money, jewels, baggage . . . put 'em through the airlock in batches. Christ! The clothes all over the ship . . . the shrieking and the —Jesus! If I could only forget! The naked people . . . blue . . . busting wide open . . . spinning behind us. The clothes all over the ship. Six hundred. Scuttled!"

"You bastard! It was a racket? You took their money and never intended bringing them to Earth?"

"It was a racket."

"And that's why you didn't pick me up?"

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"Would have had to scuttle you, anyway."

"Who gave the order?"

"Captain."

"Name?"

"Joyce. Lindsey Joyce."

"Address?"

"Skoptsy Colony, Mars."

Foyle was thunderstruck. "He's a Skoptsy? You mean after hunting him for a year, I can't touch him, hurt him, make him feel what I felt?" He turned away from the tortured man on the table, equally tortured himself by frustration. "A Skoptsy! The one thing I never figured on! After preparing that port stateroom for him — what am I going to do? What in God's name am I going to do?" he roared in fury, the stigmata showing livid on his face.

HE WAS recalled by a desperate moan from Kempsey. He returned to the table. "Let's get it straight for the last time. This Skoptsy, Lindsey Joyce, gave the order to scuttle the reffs?"

"Yes."

"And to let me rot?"

"Yes. Yes. Yes! That's enough! Let me die!"

"Live, you filthy, heartless slaughterer! Live without a heart. Live and suffer. I'll keep you alive forever, you —"

A lurid flash of light caught Foyle's eye. He looked up. His burning image was staring through the large square porthole of the stateroom. As he leaped to the porthole, the Burning Man disappeared.

Foyle left the stateroom and darted forward to main controls where the observation bubble gave him two hundred and seventy degrees of vision. The Burning Man was nowhere in sight.

"It's not real," he muttered. "It couldn't be real. It's a sign, a good luck sign — a Guardian Angel. It saved me on the Spanish Stairs. It's telling me to go ahead and find Lindsey Joyce."

He strapped himself into the pilot chair, ignited the yawl's jets and slammed into full acceleration.

"Lindsey Joyce, Skoptsy Colony, Mars," he thought as he was thrust back deep into the pneumatic chair. "A Skoptsy . . . without senses, without pleasure, without pain. The ultimate in Stoic escape. How am I going to put him in the port stateroom and make him feel what I felt aboard *Nomad?* Damnation! It's as though he's dead. He *is* dead. And I've got to figure how to whip a dead body and make it feel pain. To come so close to the end and have the door slammed in your face. . . . The damnable frustration of revenge. Revenge is for dreams, never for reality."

An hour later, he released himself from the acceleration and his

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fury, unbuckled himself from the chair, and remembered Kempsey. He went aft to the surgery. The extreme acceleration of the take-off had choked the blood-pump. Kempsey was dead. Suddenly Foyle was overcome with a novel passionate revulsion for himself. He fought it helplessly.

"What's a matter, you?" he whispered. "Think of the six hundred, scuttled. . . . Think of yourself. . . . Are you turning into a white-livered Cellar-Christian turning the other cheek and whining forgiveness? Olivia, what are you doing to me? Give me strength, not cowardice. . . ."

Nevertheless, he averted his eyes as he scuttled the body.

13

ALL PERSONS KNOWN TO BE IN THE EMPLOY OF FOURMYLE OF CERES OR ASSOCIATED WITH HIM IN ANY CAPACITY TO BE HELD FOR QUESTIONING. Y-Y: CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE.

ALL EMPLOYEES OF THIS COMPANY TO MAINTAIN STRICT WATCH FOR ONE FOURMYLE OF CERES AND REPORT AT ONCE TO LOCAL MR. PRESTO. PRESTEIGN.

ALL COURIERS WILL ABANDON PRESENT ASSIGNMENTS AND REPORT FOR REASSIGNMENT TO FOYLE CASE. DAGENHAM.

A WORLDWIDE BANK HOLIDAY WILL BE DECLARED IMMEDIATELY IN THE NAME OF THE WAR CRISIS TO CUT FOURMYLE OFF FROM ALL FUNDS. Y-Y: CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE.

ANYONE MAKING INQUIRIES RE: SS VORGA TO BE TAKEN TO CASTLE PRESTEIGN FOR EXAMINATION. PRESTEIGN.

ALL PORTS AND FIELDS IN INNER PLANETS TO BE ALTERED FOR ARRIVAL OF FOURMYLE. QUARANTINE AND CUSTOMS TO CHECK ALL LANDINGS. Y-Y: CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE.

OLD ST. PATRICK'S TO BE SEARCHED AND WATCHED. DAGENHAM.

THE FILES OF BO'NESS & UIG TO BE CHECKED FOR NAMES OF OFFICERS AND MEN OF VORGA TO ANTICIPATE, IF POSSIBLE, FOYLE'S NEXT MOVE. PRESTEIGN.

WAR CRIMES COMMISSION TO MAKE OF LIST OF PUBLIC ENEMIES, GIVING FOYLE NUMBER ONE SPOT. Y-Y: CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE.

Cr 1,000,000 REWARD OFFERED FOR INFORMATION LEADING TO APPREHENSION OF FOURMYLE OF CERES, ALIAS GULLIVER FOYLE, ALIAS GULLY FOYLE, NOW AT

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LARGE IN THE INNER PLANETS. PRIORITY!

AFTER two centuries of colonization, the air struggle on Mars was still so critical that the V-L Law, the Vegetative-Lynch Law, was still in effect. It was a killing offense to endanger or destroy any plant vital to the transformation of Mars' carbon dioxide atmosphere into an oxygen atmosphere. Even blades of grass were sacred. There was no need to erect KEEP OFF THE GRASS neons. The man who wandered off a path onto a lawn would be instantly shot. So would the woman who picked a flower. Two centuries of sudden death had inspired a reverence for green growing things that almost amounted to a religion.

Foyle remembered this as he raced up the center of the causeway leading to Mars St. Michele. He had jaunted direct from the Syrtis airport to the St. Michele stage at the foot of the causeway, which stretched for a quarter of a mile through green fields to Mars St. Michele. The rest of the distance had to be traversed on foot.

Like the original Mont St. Michele on the French coast, Mars St. Michele was a majestic Gothic cathedral of spires and buttresses looming on a hill and yearning toward the sky. Ocean tides surrounded Mont St. Michele on Earth; green tides of grass surrounded Mars St. Michele. Both were fortresses. Mont St. Michele had been a fortress of faith before organized religion was abolished. Mars St. Michele was a fortress of telepathy. Within it lived Mars' sole full telepath, Sigurd Magsman.

"Now these are the defenses protecting Sigurd Magsman," Foyle chanted, halfway between hysteria and litany. "Firstly, the Solar System; secondly, Martial Law; thirdly, Dagenham-Presteign & Co.; fourthly, the fortress itself; fifthly, the uniformed guards, attendants, servants and admirers of the bearded sage we all know so well, Sigurd Magsman, selling his awesome powers for awesome prices . . ."

Foyle laughed immoderately: "But there's a sixthly that I know: Sigurd Magsman's Achilles' Heel. I've paid Cr. 1,000,000 to Sigurd the IIIrd . . . or was he the IVth?"

He passed through the outer labyrinth of Mars St. Michele with his forged credentials and was tempted to bluff or proceed directly by Commando Action to an audience with the Great Man himself, but time was pressing and his enemies were closing in and he could not afford to satisfy his curiosity. Instead, he accelerated, blurred, and found a humble cottage set in a walled garden within the Mars St. Michele home

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farm. It had drab windows and a thatched roof and might have been mistaken for a stable.

Foyle slipped inside.

THE cottage was a nursery. Three pleasant nannies sat motionless in rocking chairs, knitting poised in their frozen hands. The blur that was Foyle came up behind them and quietly stung them with ampules. Then he decelerated. He looked at the ancient, ancient child, the wizened, shriveled boy who was seated on the floor playing with electronic trains.

"Hello, Sigurd," Foyle said.

The child began to cry.

"What are you afraid of? I'm not going to hurt you."

"You're a bad man with a bad face."

"I'm your friend, Sigurd."

"No, you're not. You want me to do b-bad things."

"I'm your friend. Look, I know all about those big hairy men who pretend to be you, but I won't tell. Read me and see."

"You're going to hurt him and y-you want me to tell him."

"Who?"

"The captain-man. The Skl—Skot—" The child fumbled with the word, wailing louder. *"Go away. You're bad. Badness in your head and burning mens and—"*

"Come here, Sigurd."

"No. NANNIE! NAN-N-I-E!"

"Shut up, you little monster!" Foyle grabbed the seventy-year-old child and shook it. "This is going to be a brand-new experience for you, Sigurd. The first time you've ever been walloped into anything. Understand?"

The ancient child read him and howled.

"We're going on a trip to the Skoptsy Colony. If you behave yourself and do what you're told, I'll bring you back safe and give you a lolly or whatever the hell they bribe you with. If you don't behave, I'll beat the living daylights out of you."

"No, you won't. You won't! I'm Sigurd the telepath. You wouldn't dare."

"Sonny, I'm Gully Foyle, Solar Enemy Number One. I'm just a step away from the finish of a year-long hunt, risking my neck because I need you to settle accounts with a son of a bitch who—Sonny, I'm Gully Foyle. There isn't anything I wouldn't dare."

The telepath began broadcasting terror with such an uproar that alarms sounded all over Mars St. Michele. Foyle took a firm grip on the ancient child, accelerated, and carried him out of the fortress. Then he jaunted.

URGENT. SIGURD MAGSMAN KIDNAPED BY MAN IDENTIFIED AS GULLIVER FOYLE, ALIAS FOURMYLE OF

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CERES, SOLAR ENEMY NUMBER ONE. DESTINATION TENTATIVELY FIXED. ALERT COMMANDO BRIGADE. INFORM CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE. URGENT!

THE ancient Skoptsy sect of White Russia, believing that sex was the root of all evil, practiced an atrocious self-castration to extirpate the root. The modern Skoptsys, believing that sensation was the root of all evil, practiced an even more barbaric custom. Having entered the Skoptsy Colony and paid a fortune for the privilege, the initiates submitted joyously to an operation that severed the sensory nervous system, and lived out their days without sight, sound, speech, smell, taste or touch.

When they first entered the bastardized monastery, the initiates were shown elegant ivory cells in which it was intimated they would spend the remainder of their lives in rapt contemplation, lovingly tended. In actuality, the senseless creatures were packed in rock cells where they sat on rough stone slabs and were fed and exercised once a day. For twenty-three out of twenty-four hours, they sat alone in the dark, untended, unguarded, unloved.

"The living dead," Foyle muttered. He decelerated, put Sigurd Magsman down and switched on the retinal light in his eyes, trying to pierce the womb-gloom. It was midnight above ground. It was permanent midnight down in these womb-tombs. Sigurd Magsman was broadcasting terror and anguish with such a telepathic bray that Foyle was forced to shake the child again.

"Shut up!" he whispered. "You can't wake these dead. Now find me Lindsey Joyce."

The child whimpered.

"They're sick . . . all sick . . . worms in their heads and sickness and —"

"Christ, don't I know it! Come on, let's get it over with. There's worse to come."

They went down the twisting labyrinth of the catacombs. The stone slabs shelved the walls from floor to ceiling. The Skoptsys, white as slugs, mute as corpses, motionless as Buddhas, filled the caverns with the odor of vegetative life. The telepathic child wept and shrieked. Foyle never relaxed his relentless grip, never relaxed the hunt.

"Johnson, Wright, Keeley, Graff, Nastro, Underwood . . . there's thousands here!" Foyle read off the bronze identification plates attached to the slabs. "Reach out, Sigurd. Find Lindsey Joyce for me. We can't go over them name by name. Regal, Cone, Brady, Vincent — What in the name of God!"

Sigurd screamed.

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FOYLE started back. One of the bone-white figures had cuffed his brow. It was swaying and writhing, its face twitching. All the white slugs on their shelves were squirming and writhing. Sigurd Magsman's constant telepathic broadcast of anguish and terror was reaching them and torturing them.

"Stop it!" Foyle snapped. "Find Lindsey Joyce and we'll get out of here. Reach out and find him."

"Down there." Sigurd wept. *"Straight down there. Seven, eight, nine shelves down. I want to go home. I'm sick. I—"*

Foyle went pell-mell down the catacombs with Sigurd, reading off identification plates until at last he came to: "LINDSEY JOYCE. BOUGAINVILLE. VENUS."

This was his enemy, the instigator of his death and the deaths of the six hundred from Callisto. This was the enemy for whom he had planned vengeance and had prepared the agony of the port stateroom aboard his yawl.

This was *Vorga.*

It was a woman.

Foyle gaped in shock. In these days of the double standard, with women kept in purdah, there were many reported cases of women masquerading as men to enter the worlds closed to them, but he had never yet heard of a woman in the merchant marine, masquerading her way to the top.

"This?" he exclaimed furiously. "This is Lindsey Joyce? Lindsey Joyce off the *Vorga*? Ask her."

"I don't know what Vorga is."

"Ask her!"

"But I don't— She was— She like gave orders."

"Captain?"

"I don't like what's inside her. It's all sick and dark. It hurts. I want to go home."

"Ask her. Was she captain of the Vorga?"

"Yes. Please, please, please don't make me go inside her any more. It's twisty and hurts. I don't like her."

"Tell her I'm the man she wouldn't pick up on September 16th, 2436. Tell her it's taken a long time, but I've finally come to settle the account. Tell her I'm going to pay her back."

"I d-don't understand. Don't understand."

"Tell her I'm going to kill her, slow and hard. Tell her I've got a stateroom aboard my yawl, fitted up just like my locker aboard *Nomad* where I rotted for six months . . . where she ordered *Vorga* to leave me to die. Tell her she's going to rot and die just like me. Tell her!" Foyle shook the wizened child furiously. "Make her feel it. Don't let her get away by turning Skoptsy. Tell her I kill her filthy. Read me and tell her!"

"She— sh-she didn't give that order."

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"She what?"

"I c-can't understand her."

"She didn't give the order to scuttle me?"

"I'm afraid to go in."

"Go in, you little monster, or I'll take you apart. What does she mean?"

THE child wailed; the woman writhed; Foyle fumed. "Go in! Go in! Get it out of her! Jesus, why does the only telepath on Mars have to be a child? Sigurd! Sigurd, listen to me. Ask her: Did she give the order to scuttle the reffs?"

"No. No!"

"No, she didn't, or no, you won't?"

"She didn't."

"Did she give the order to pass *Nomad* by?"

"She's twisty and sicky. Oh, please! NAN-N-I-E! I want to go home. Want to go."

"Did she give the order to pass *Nomad* by?"

"No. Take me home."

"Ask her who did!" roared Gully Foyle.

"I want my Nannie."

"Ask her who could give her an order. She was captain aboard her own ship. Who could command her? Ask her!"

"No. No. No. I'm afraid. She's sick. She's bad. I don't understand her. I want my Nannie. I want to go home."

The child was shrieking and shaking; Foyle was shouting. As Foyle reached for the child in a rage, his eyes were blinded by brilliant light. The entire catacomb was illuminated by the Burning Man. Foyle's image stood before him, face hideous, clothes on fire, the blazing eyes fixed on the convulsing Skoptsy that had been Lindsey Joyce.

The Burning Man opened his tiger mouth. A grating sound emerged. It was like flaming laughter.

"She hurts," he said.

"Who are you?" Foyle whispered.

The Burning Man winced. "Too bright," he said. "Less light."

Foyle took a step forward.

The Burning Man clapped hands over his ears in agony. "Too loud! Don't move so loud." Suddenly he laughed again. "Listen to her. She's screaming. Begging. She doesn't want to die. She doesn't want to be hurt. Listen to her."

Foyle trembled.

"She's telling us who gave the order. Can't you hear? Listen with your eyes." The Burning Man pointed a talon finger at the writhing Skoptsy. "She says Olivia."

"What!"

"Olivia Presteign. Olivia Presteign. Olivia Presteign."

The Burning Man vanished.

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The catacombs were dark again.

Colored lights and cacophonies whirled around Foyle. He gasped and staggered. "Blue jaunte," he muttered. "Olivia. No. Not. Never. Olivia. I—"

He felt a hand reach for his.

"Jiz?" he croaked.

He became aware that Sigurd Magsman was holding his hand and weeping. He picked the boy up.

"I hurt," Sigurd whimpered.

"I hurt, too, son."

"Want to go home."

"I'll take you home."

STILL holding the boy in his arms, he blundered through the catacombs.

"The living dead," he mumbled. And then: "I've joined them."

He found the stone steps that led up from the depths to the monastery cloister above ground. He trudged up the steps, tasting death and desolation. There was bright light above him, and for a moment he imagined that dawn had come already. Then he realized that the cloister was brilliantly lit with artificial light. There was the tramp of shod feet and the low growl of commands. Halfway up the steps, Foyle stopped and mustered himself.

"Sigurd," he whispered. "Who's above us? Find out."

"Sojers," the child answered.

"Soldiers? What soldiers?"

"Commando sojers." Sigurd's crumpled face brightened. *"They come for me. To take me home to Nannie. HERE I AM! HERE I AM!"*

The telepathic clamor brought a shout from overhead. Foyle accelerated and blurred up the rest of the steps to the cloister. It was a square of Romanesque arches surrounding a green lawn. In the center of the lawn was a giant Cedar of Lebanon. The flagged walks swarmed with Commando search-parties and Foyle came face to face with his match, for, an instant after they saw his blur whip up from the catacombs, they accelerated, too, and all were on even terms.

But Foyle had the boy. Shooting was impossible. Cradling Sigurd in his arms, he wove through the cloister like a broken-field runner hurtling toward a goal. No one dared block him, for at plus-five acceleration, a head-on collision between two bodies would be instantly fatal to both. Objectively, this break-neck skirmish looked like a five-second zigzag of lightning.

Foyle broke out of the cloister, went through the main hall of the monastery, passed through the labyrinth and reached the public jaunte stage outside the main gate. There he stopped, decelerated and jaunted to the monas-

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tery airfield, half a mile distant. The field was also ablaze with lights and swarming with Commandos. Every anti-grav pit was occupied by a Brigade ship. His own yawl was under guard.

A fifth of a second after Foyle arrived at the field, the pursuers from the monastery jaunted in. He looked around desperately. He was surrounded by half a regiment of Commandos, all under acceleration, all geared for lethal action, all his equal or better.

The odds were impossible.

AND then the Outer Satellites altered the odds. Exactly one week after the saturation raid on Terra, they struck at Mars.

Again the missiles came down on the midnight-to-dawn quadrant. Again the heavens twinkled with interceptions and detonations, and the horizon exploded great puffs of light while the ground shook. But this time there was a ghastly variation, for a brilliant nova burst overhead, flooding the nightside of the planet with garish light. A swarm of fission-heads had struck Mars' tiny satellite, Phobos, instantly vaporizing it into a sunlet.

The Recognition Lag of the Commandos to this appalling attack gave Foyle his opportunity. He accelerated again and burst through them to his yawl. He stopped before the main hatch and saw the stunned guard party hesitate between a continuance of the old action and a response to the new.

Foyle hurled Sigurd Magsman up into the air like an ancient Scotsman tossing the caber. As the guard party rushed to catch the boy, Foyle dived through them into his yawl, slammed the hatch and dogged it.

Still under acceleration, never pausing to see if anyone was inside the yawl, he shot forward to controls, tripped the release lever and, as the yawl started to float up the anti-grav beam, threw on full 10-G propulsion. He was not strapped into the pilot chair. The effect of the 10-G drive on his accelerated and unprotected body was monstrous.

A creeping force took hold of him and spilled him out of the chair. He inched back toward the rear wall of the control chamber like a sleepwalker. To his accelerated senses, the wall appeared to approach him. He thrust out both arms, palms flat against the wall to brace himself. The sluggish power thrusting him back jacked his arms apart and forced him against the wall, gently at first, then harder and harder until face, jaw, chest and body were crushed against the metal.

The mounting pressure became agonizing. He tried to trip the

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switchboard in his mouth with his tongue, but the propulsion crushing him against the wall made it impossible for him to move his distorted mouth.

A burst of explosions, so far down the sound spectrum that they sounded like sodden rockslides, told him that the Commando Brigade was bombarding him with shots from below.

As the yawl tore up into the blue-black of outer space, he began to scream in a bat-screech that was snapped off by unconsciousness.

— ALFRED BESTER

Concluded Next Month

FORECAST

Next month, Alfred Bester's THE STARS MY DESTINATION concludes with as explosive a climax as ever was achieved by any science fiction serial. Mull this volcanic concept: PyrE is power beyond Man's most fantastic dream . . . but Gully Foyle's Burning Man is a fantastic dream within Man's power!

MORAL EQUIVALENT, a novelet by Kris Neville, asks a sensible question: Why shouldn't one culture imitate another culture right down to the last little detail? But the answer is a harrowing one: The last little detail may be just that—the final one!

In the second and concluding installment of TRACKING DOWN THE "SEA SERPENT," Willy Ley systematically takes you to the end of a hunt that covers centuries and oceans and seas . . . a hunt manned by trained observers, not charlatans or even landlubbers. Their detailed reports of what they saw may leave room for argument, but none whatever for doubt. As a case history of an age-old mystery, it is a brilliant presentation of evidence that would satisfy the most exacting judge.

Short stories, of course, plus our regular features . . . plus a warm visit by our famous and beloved four-armed Santa Claus! Poor chap, he really has his hands full passing out gifts—take a look at the next page and see how you can help him out—while at the same time making grateful friends and saving money!

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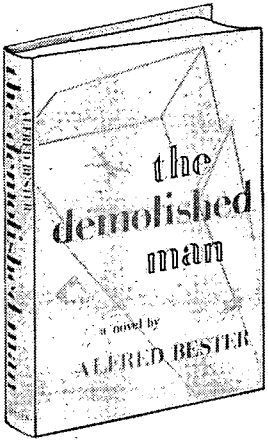

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(*Continued from page 4*)

dishes made of it. The amount ultimately thrown out is very nearly the original weight.

Any housewife who uses a laundromat will depose that the only way to get a laundry beneath the nine-pound load seems to be to send in an empty bag.

When you move into an empty apartment, the amount of junk to be cleared out is beyond all reason or explanation, especially magazines and newspapers; a number of experimenters have found that these accumulate even when none are bought.

There are many other examples, but let's examine the loss side of the ledger.

You can tag your socks like migratory birds or staple them together, but however carefully you handle them, you will invariably wind up with a handful (or drawerful) of single socks.

There is no known way of keeping your stock of handkerchiefs from steadily dwindling.

Even if you make a point of not eating the canned foods you especially like, they are always gone when you want them. (There is an obverse: the ones you don't like multiply.)

Game is notorious for its shrinkage — fish lose weight and length from water to boat and still more from boat to home. The theory that this is because of fighting and exposure to air is untrue; if they escape the hook, they swiftly grow big again.

No matter how many light bulbs of the right wattage you may buy, you usually have to settle for a 40 when a 100 blows.

There is an inexplicable quantitative difference between a quart of soda (or beer) and a quart of milk.

When you break a shoe lace, the ones in the drawer will always be the wrong size and color.

The books in your library are not the ones you bought. Sugar and coffee dribble away at the most awkward times. No one knows what happens to the linen for the guest room.

There's more, but this is enough to work with. Sinister? I thought so at first, but have you noticed how the ledger balances? Exasperatingly, yes, but it does balance: a sock for a pound of fat, canned Alberta peaches for never-ending roasts, old magazines and newspapers for light bulbs.

Somewhere, it seems to me, there is a marketplace where such trades are considered equitable. I don't know where and I have no idea how it's done or what the profit is for the middleman, but I have a thoroughly grudging respect for both traders and customers — they give fair value, at least by their standards.

— H. L. GOLD

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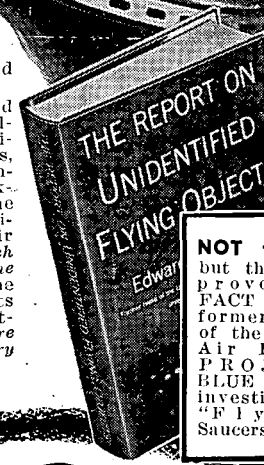

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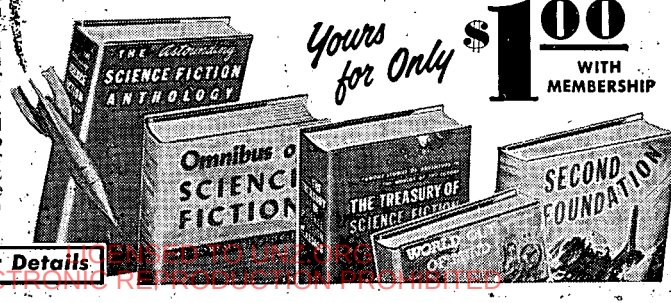

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